This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

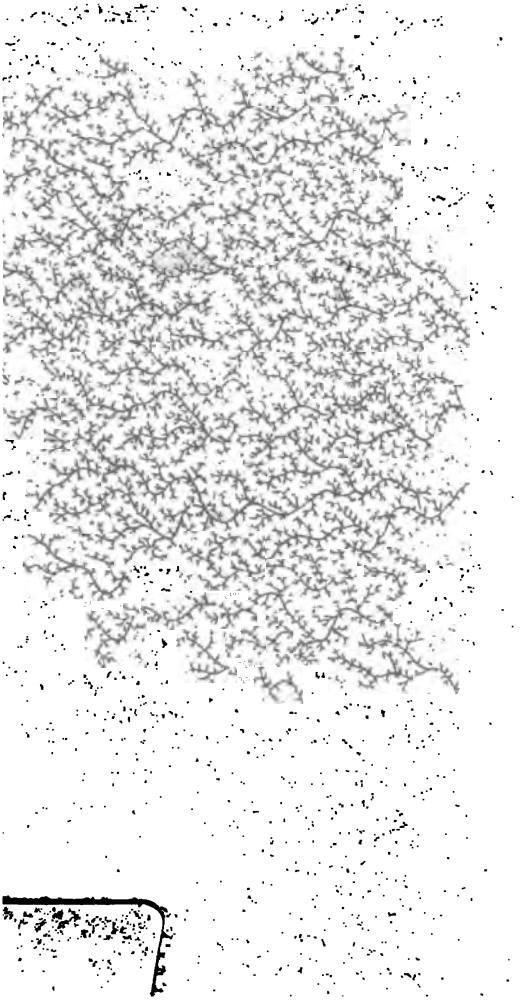
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

3 3433 07487111 6



COLLECTION

OF

BRITISH AUTHORS.

VOL. 514.

THE CONFESSIONS OF CON CREGAN

BY

CHARLES LEVER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

THE CONFESSIONS

OF

CON CREGAN:

THE IRISH GIL BLAS.

BY

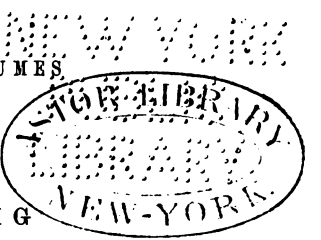
CHARLES LEVER,

AUTHOR OF "CHARLES O'MALLEY," ETC.

COPYRIGHT EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1860.

ГПВЧУВА
ЬПВГГС
ИЕЛАПИК

THE CONFESSIONS OF CON CREGAN.

VOL. II.

CHAPTER I.

A Night in a Forest of Texas.

The Friar ceased his efforts, and calling the Mexican to one side, whispered something in a low, cautious manner. The other seemed to demur and hesitate, but, after a brief space, appeared to yield; when, replacing the poles beside the wagon, he turned the horses' heads toward the road by which they had just come.

"We are about to try a ford some miles further up the stream," said the Padre, "and so, we commend you to the Virgin, and wish you a prosperous journey."

"All roads are alike to me, holy father," said I, with a coolness that cost me something to assume.

"Then take the shortest, and you'll be soonest at your journey's end," said he, gruffly.

"Who can say that?" rejoined I; "it's no difficult matter to lose one's way in a dense forest, where the tracks are unknown."

"There is but one path, and it cannot be mistaken," said he, in the same tone.

"It has one great disadvantage, father," said I.

"What is that?"

"*There is* no companionship on it; and, to say truth, I

have too much of the Irishman in me to leave good company for the pleasure of travelling all alone."

"Methinks you have very little of the Irishman about you, in another respect," said he, with a sneer of no doubtful meaning.

"How so?" said I, eagerly.

"In volunteering your society when it is not sought for, young gentleman," said he, with a look of steadfast effrontery; "at least, I can say, such were not the habits of the land as I remember it some forty years ago."

"Ah, holy father, it has grown out of many a barbarous custom since your time; — the people have given up drinking and faction-fighting, and you may travel fifty miles a day for a week together and never meet with a friar."

"Peace be with you," said he, waving his hand, but with a gesture it was easy to see boded more passion than patience.

I hesitated for a second what to do; and, at last, feeling that another word might perhaps endanger the victory I had won, I dashed spurs into the mare's flanks, and, with the shout the ostler had recommended, rushed her at the stream. Over she went, "like a bird," lighting on the opposite bank with her hind legs "well up," and the next moment plunged into the forest.

Scarcely, however, had I proceeded fifty paces than I drew up. The dense wood effectually shut out the river from my view, and even masked the sounds of the rushing water. A suspicion dwelt on my mind, that the Friar was *not* going back, and that he had merely concerted this plan with the Mexican the easier to disembarrass himself of my company. The seeming pertinacity of *his* purpose suggested an equal obstinacy of resistance on *my* part. Some will doubtless say that it argued very little pride, and a very weak self-esteem in Con Cregan, to continue to impose his society where it had been peremptorily declined; and so had it been, doubtless, had the scene been a great city, ruled and regulated by its thousand-and-one *conventionalities*. But the prairies are separated

something longer than mere miles from the land of kid gloves and visiting tickets. Ceremonial in such latitudes would be as unsuitable as a court suit.

Besides, I argued thus: — "A very underdone slice of tough venison, with a draught of spring water, constitute in these regions a very appetizing meal; and for the same reason, a very morose friar, and a still sulkier servant, may be accepted as very tolerable travelling companions. Enjoy better when it can be had, Con: but prefer even the humblest fare to a famine." A rule more applicable to mental food than to material.

In a little self-colloquy after this kind, I crept stealthily back, leading Charry by the bridle, and halting at intervals to listen. What a triumph to my skill in divination as I heard the Friar's loud voice overtopping the gushing flood, while he exhorted his beasts in the most energetic fashion!

I advanced cautiously till I gained a little clump of brushwood, from which I could see the river and the group perfectly. The Friar had now mounted the wagon, and held the reins; the Mexican was however standing in the stream, and leading the cattle, who appeared to have regained somewhat more of their courage, and were slowly proceeding, sniffing timidly as they went, and pawing the water fretfully.

The Mexican advanced boldly, till the water reached nigh the top of his great *botas vaqueras*, immense boots of buffalo hide, which, it is said, resist the bite of either cayman or serpent; and so far the horses went, doubtless from the encouragement. As soon, however, as the deepening flood warned the man to mount the wagon, they halted abruptly, and stood pawing and splashing the stream, while their ears flattened back, and their drawn-in tails, evinced the terror that was on them.

Objurgations — entreaties — prayers — curses — menaces were all in vain, — a step further they would not budge. All *that the Spanish* contained of guttural was hurled at them

without success — the cow-hide whip might welt their flanks and leave great ridges at every stroke — the huge pole of the Mexican might belabour them, with a running accompaniment of kicks, — but to no purpose. They cared as little for the cow-hide as the "calendar," — neither saints nor thrashings could persuade them to move on. Saint Anthony — and Saint Ursula — Saint Forimund of Cordova, with various others, were invoked to no end. Saint Clement of Capua, to whom all poisonous reptiles, from boas to whipsnakes, owe allegiance, was called upon to aid the travellers; but the quadrupeds took no heed of these entreaties, but showed a most Protestant contempt for the whole litany.

There was a pause: wearied with flogging, and tired out with vain exhortations, both Friar and Mexican ceased; and, as if in compensation to their long pent-up feelings, vented their anger in a very guttural round of maledictions upon the whole animal creation, and in particular on that part of it who would not be eaten by alligators without signs of resistance and opposition. Whether this new turn of events had any influence, or that the matter was more owing to "natural causes," I cannot say; but, just then, the horse which had been already bitten, reared straight up, and with a loud snort plunged forward, carrying with him the other. By his plunge he had reached a deep part of the stream, where the water came half way up his body. Another spring smashed one of the traces, and left him free to kick violently behind him — a privilege he certainly hastened to avail himself of. His fellow, whether from sympathy or not, imitated the performance, and there they were lashing and plunging with all their might, while the wagon, against which the strong current beat in its force, threatened at every instant to capsize. The Friar struggled manfully, as did his follower; but, unfortunately, one of the reins gave way, and by the violent tugging at the remaining one, the animals were turned out of their course, and dragged round to the very middle of the stream. *A twenty yards* lower down, the river fell by a kind of cascade *some ten or twelve feet*, and towards this spot now the

furiated horses seemed rushing. Had it been practicable, a strong man might, by throwing himself into the water, have caught the horses' heads and held them back, but the stream swarmed with poisonous reptiles, which made such an effort almost inevitable death.

It was now a scene of terrible and most exciting interest. The maddened horses, alternately rising and sinking, writhed and twisted in agonies of pain. The men's voices mingled with the gushing torrent and the splashing water, which rose higher and higher at each plunge, while a shrill shriek from within the wagon topped all, and in its cadence seemed to speak a heart torn with terror. As I looked, the sun had set, and as speedily as though a curtain had fallen, the soft light of evening gave way to a grey darkness. I rode down to the bank, and as I reached it, one of the horses, after a terrific struggle to get free, plunged head foremost down and disappeared. The other, unable by himself alone to resist the weight of the wagon, which already was floating in the stream, swung round with the torrent, and was now dragging along toward the cataract. The dusky indistinctness even added to the terror of the picture, as the white water splashed up on every side, and at times seemed actually to cover the whole party in its scattering foam. The friar, now leaning back, tore open one of the curtains, and at the same instant I saw a female arm stretch out and clasp him, while a shrill cry burst forth that thrilled to my very heart.

They were already within a few yards of the cataract: a moment or two more they must be over it and lost! I spurred Charry forward, and down we plunged into the water, without the slightest thought of what was to follow. Half swimming, half bounding, I reached the wagon, which now, broadside on the falls, tottered with every stroke of the fast rolling river. The Mexican was standing on the pole, and endeavouring to hold back the horse; while the friar, ripping the canvas with his knife, was endeavouring to extricate the female figure, who, sunk on her knees, seemed utterly incapable of any effort *for her own safety.*

Whether maddened by the bite of some monster beneath the water, or having lost his footing, I know not, but the horse went over the falls, while the Mexican, vainly endeavouring to hold him, was carried down with him; the wagon, reeling with the shock, heeled over to the side, and was fast sinking, when I caught hold of the outstretched hand of the woman, and drew her towards me. "Leap — spring towards him," cried the friar; and she obeyed the words, and with a bound, seated herself behind me.

Breasting the water bravely, Charry bounded on, and in less than a minute reached the bank, which the friar, by the aid of a leaping-pole, had gained before us.

Having placed the half-lifeless girl on the sward, I hastened to see after the poor Mexican. Alas! of him and the horse we never saw trace afterwards. We called aloud, we shouted, and even continued along the stream for a considerable space, but to no purpose: the poor fellow had evidently perished — perhaps by a death too horrible to think of. The friar wrung his hands in agony, and mingled his thanksgiving for his own safety with lamentations for his lost companion; and so intent was he on these themes, that he never recognised me, nor, indeed, seemed conscious of my presence. At last, as we turned our steps towards where the girl lay, he said, "Is it possible that you are the Caballero we parted with before sunset?"

"Yes," said I, "the same. You were loth to accept of my company, but you see there is a fate in it, after all; you cannot get rid of me so readily."

"Nor shall we try, Señhor," said the girl, passionately, but with a foreign accent in her words; as she took my hands, and pressed them to her lips.

The friar said something hastily in Spanish, which seemed a rebuke, for she drew back at once, and buried her face in her mantle.

"Donna Maria is my niece, Señhor, and has only just l the convent of the 'Sacred Heart.' She knows nothi *of the world, nor what* beseems her as a young maiden."

This the friar spoke harshly, and with a manner that to me sounded far more in need of an apology than did the young girl's grateful emotion.

What was to be done became now the question. We were at least thirty miles from Bexar, and not a village, nor even a log-hut between us and that city. To go back was impossible; so that, like practical people, we at once addressed ourselves to the available alternative.

"Picquet your beast, and let us light a fire," said Fra Miguel, with the air of a man who would not waste life in vain regrets. "Thank Providence, we have both grass and water; and although the one always brings snakes, and the other alligators, it is better than to bivouac on the Red River, with iron ore in the stream, and hard flints to sleep on."

Fastening my beast to a tree, I unstrapped my saddle-bags, and removed my saddle; disposing which most artistically in the fashion of an arm-chair for Donna Maria at the foot of a stupendous beech, I set about the preparation of a fire. The friar, however, had almost anticipated me; and with both arms loaded with dead wood, sat himself down to construct a species of hearth, placing a little circle of stones around in such a way as to give a draught to the blaze.

"We must fast to-night, Señhor," said he; "but it will ɔount to us hereafter. Fan the fire with your hat, it will soon ɹlaze briskly."

"If it were not for that young lady," said I, "whose suf-ɾrings are far greater than ours —"

"Speak not of her, Señhor; Donna Maria de los Dolores ɯs called after our Mother of Sorrows, and she may as well gin her apprenticeship to grief. She is the only child of my ɔther, who had sent her to be educated at New Orleans, and ɯow returning home to see her father, before she takes the of her noviciate."

A very low sigh — so low as only to be audible to myself, ɔ *from beneath* the beech-tree, and I threw a handful of

chips upon the fire, hoping to catch a glimpse of the features of my fair fellow-traveller. Fra Miguel, however, balked my stratagem by topping the fire with a stout log, as he said, "You are too spend-thrift, Señhor, we shall need to husband our resources, or we'll not have enough for the night long."

"Would you not like to come nearer to the blaze, Señhora?" said I, respectfully.

"Thanks, sir, but perhaps —"

"Speak out, child," broke in the Father, "speak out, and say that you are counting your rosary, and would not wish to be disturbed. And you, Señhor, if I err not, in your eagerness to aid us, have forgotten to water your gallant beast — don't lead him to the stream, that would be unsafe; take my sombrero; it has often served a like purpose before now. Twice full is enough for any horse in these countries." I would have declined this offer, but I felt that submission in everything would be my safest passport to his good opinion, and so armed with the "friar's beaver," I made my way to the stream.

Whatever his eulogies upon the pitcher-like qualities of his head-piece — to me they seemed most undeserved; for scarcely had I filled it, than the water ran through like a sieve. The oftener, too, was the process repeated, the less chance of there appear of success; for, instead of retaining the fluid all, the material became so saturated, that it threatened to tear in pieces every time it was filled, and ere I could lift was totally empty. Half angry with the friar, and still more annoyed at my own ineptitude, I gave up the effort, returned to where I had left him, confessing my failure and came forward.

"Steep your 'kerchief in the stream, then, and wash beast's mouth," said he, upon his knees, where, with a string of beads, he was engaged with his devotions.

I retired, abashed at my intrusion, and proceeded to *I was directed.*

"What, if all these cares for my horse, and all these devotional exercises, were but stratagems to get rid of my company for a season?" thought I; as I perceived, that scarcely had I left the spot, than the Friar arose from his knees, and seemed to busy himself about something in the trees. Full of this impression, I made a little circuit of the place; and what was my surprise to observe, that he had converted his upper robe of coarse blanket-cloth into a kind of hammock for Donna Maria, in which, fastened at either end to the bough of a tree, she was now swinging to and fro, with apparently all the pleasure of a happy child.

"Don't you like it, uncle, after all," said she, laughing; "it's exactly what one has read of in Juan Cordova's stories, to be bivouacking in a great forest, with a great fire, to keep away the jaguars."

"Hush! and go to sleep, child. I neither like it for thee, nor myself. There are more dangerous things than jaguars in these woods."

"Ah! you mean the bears, uncle?"

"I do not," growled he, sulkily.

"As for snakes, one gets used to them; besides, they go into the tall grass."

"Ay, ay, snakes in the grass, just so!" muttered the Friar, "but this youth will be back, presently, and let him not hear you talk such silly nonsense. Good night, good night."

"Good night," sighed she, "but I cannot sleep; I love so to see the fireflies dancing through the leaves, and to hear that rushing river."

"Hush! he's coming," said the Friar; and all was still.

When I came up, "The Friar" was again sunk in holy meditation, so that, disposing myself beside the fire, with my rifle at one side, and my pistols at the other, I lay down to sleep. Although I closed my eyes, and lay still, I did not sleep. My thoughts were full of Donna Maria, of whom I weaved a hundred conjectures. It was evident she was young; her voice was soft and musical too, and had that pleasant bell-like cadence, so indicative of a light heart and a happy

nature. Why was she called the "Los Dolores?" I asked myself again and again, what had she in her joyousness to do with grief and care? and why should she enter a convent and become a nun? These were questions there was no solving, and apparently, if I might judge from the cadence of her now deep sigh, no less puzzling to herself than to me. The more my interest became excited for her, the stronger grew my dislike to the Friar. That he was a surly old tyrant, I perfectly satisfied myself. What a pity that I could not rescue her from such cruelty as easily as I saved her from the cataract!

Would that I could even see her! There was something so tormenting in the mystery of her concealment, and so, I deemed, must she herself feel it. We should be so happy together, journeying along day by day through the forest! What tales would I not tell her of my wanderings, and how I should enjoy the innocence of her surprise at my travelled wonders. And all the strange objects of these wild woods — how they would interest and amuse, were there "two" to wonder at and admire them. How I wished she might be pretty — what a disappointment if she were not — what a total rout to all my imaginings if she were to have red hair — how terrible if she should squint! These thoughts at last became too tantalizing for endurance, and so I tried to fall asleep and forget them, but in vain; they had got too firm hold of me, and I could not shake them off.

It was now about midnight, the fire waxed low, and "the Friar" was sound asleep. What connexion was there between these considerations, and her of whom I was thinking; who knows? I arose and sat up, listening with eager ear to the low long breathings of the Friar, who, with his round bullet-head pillowed on a pine log, slept soundly; — the gentle hum of the leaves, scarcely moved by the night wind, and the distant sound of the falling water, were lullabies to his slumber. It was a gorgeous night of stars — the sky was studded with bright orbs in all the brilliant lustre of a southern latitude. The fireflies, too, danced and glittered on every side, leaving *traces of the phosphoric* light on the leaves as they pas

The air was warm and balmy with the rich odour of the cedar and the acacia — just such a night as one would like to pass in "converse sweet" with some dear friend, mingling past memories with shadowy dreams, and straying along from bygones to futurity.

I crept over stealthily to where the Friar lay: a lively fear prevailed with me that he might be feigning sleep, and so I watched him long and narrowly. No! it was an honest slumber — the deep guttural of his mellow throat was beyond counterfeiting. I threw a log upon the fire carelessly, and with noise, to see if it would awake him; but he only muttered a word or two, that sounded like Latin, and slept on. I now strained my eyes toward the hammock, of which, under the shadow of a great sycamore tree, I could barely detect the outline through the leaves.

Should I be able to discern her features, were I to creep over? What a difficult question, and how impossible to decide by mere reasoning upon it. What if I were to try? It was a pure piece of curiosity — curiosity of the most harmless kind. I had been, doubtless, just as eager to scan the Friar's lineaments, if he had taken the same pains to conceal them from me. It was absurd, besides, to travel with a person and not see their face. Intercourse was a poor thing, without that reciprocity which looks convey — I'll have a peep, at all events, said I, summing up to myself all my arguments; and with this resolve I moved cautiously along, and, making a wide circuit, came round to the foot of the sycamore, at the side most remote from the Friar.

There was the hammock, almost within reach of my hand! it seemed to swing to and fro. I cannot say if this were mere deception; and so I crept nearer, just to satisfy my doubts. At last I reached the side, and peeped in. All I could see was the outline of a figure wrapped in a mantle, and a mass of soft silky hair, which fell over and shaded the face. It was some time before my eyes grew accustomed to the deep shadow of the spot; but by degrees I could perceive the profile of a *young and* beautiful face, resting upon one arm, the other

hung negligently at one side, and the hand drooped over the edge of the hammock. The attitude was the very perfection of graceful ease, and such as a sculptor might have modelled. What a study, too, that hand, whose dimpled loveliness the star-light speckled! How could I help touching it with my lips? the first time, with all the hallowed reverence a worshipper would vouchsafe to some holy relic; the second, with a more fervent devotion: the third, I ventured to take the hand in mine and slightly press it. Did I dream? Could the ecstasy be no more than fancy? — I thought the pressure was returned.

She turned gently around, and in a voice of surpassing softness, whispered, "Tell me your name, Señhor Caballero?" I whispered low, "Con Cregan."

"Yes, but what do your sisters call you?"

"I have none, Señhora."

"Your brothers, then?"

"I never had a brother."

"How strange! nor I either. Then how shall I call you?"

"Call me your brother," said I, trying to repossess myself of the hand she had gently withdrawn from my grasp.

"And will you call me Maria?" said she, gaily.

"If you permit it, Maria. But how will Fra Miguel think of it?"

"Ah! I forgot that. But what can he say? You saved my life. I should have been carried away like poor Sancho, but for you. Tell me how you chanced to be here, and where you are going, and whence you come, and all about you. Sit down there, on that stone. Nay, you needn't hold my hand while talking."

"Yes, but I'm afraid to be alone here in the dark, Maria," said I.

"What a silly creature it is! Now begin."

"I'd rather talk of the future, Maria, dearest. I'd rath we should speak of all the happy days we may spend t *gether.*"

"But how so? Once at Bexar, I'm to wait at the monastery till my father sends his mules and people to fetch me home: meanwhile you will have wandered away heaven knows where."

"And where do you call home, Maria?"

"Far away, beyond the Rio Grande, in the gold country, near Aguaverde."

"And why should I not go thither? I am free to turn my steps whither I will. Perhaps your father would not despise the services of one who has some smattering of knowledge upon many a theme."

"But a Caballero — a real Señhor — turn miner! They are all miners there."

"No matter: Fortune might favour me, and make me rich, and then — and then — who is to tell what changes might follow? The Caballero might bid adieu to the 'Placer,' and the fair 'Donna Maria' wave a good-bye to the nunnery — and, by the way, that is a very cruel destiny they intend for you."

"Who knows? I was very happy in the 'Sacred Heart.'"

"Possibly, Maria; but you were a child, and would have been happy anywhere. But think of the future; think of the time when you will be loved, and will love in turn; think of that bright world of which the convent-window does not admit one passing glance. Think of the glorious freedom to enjoy whatever is beautiful in Nature, and to feel sympathies with all that is great and good; and reflect upon the sad monotony of the cloister — its cold and cheerless existence, uncared for, almost unfelt."

"And when the Superior is cross!" cried she, holding up her hands.

"And she is always cross, Maria. That austere habit repels every generous emotion, as it defies every expansion of the heart. No, no: you must not be a nun."

"Well, I will not," said she.

"*You promise* me this, Maria?"

"Yes, upon one condition: that you will come to the 'Placer,' and tell my father all that you have told to me. He is so good and so kind, he'll never force me."

"But will he receive me? Will your father permit me so to speak?"

"You saved my life, Señhor," said she, half proudly, "and little as you reckon such a service, it is one upon which Don Estavan Olares will set some store."

"Ah!" said I, sighing, "how little merit had I in the feat! It did not even cost me the slightest injury."

"I am just as gratified as though you had been eaten by an alligator, Señhor," said she, laughing with a sly malice that made me half suspect that some, at least, of her innocence was assumed.

From this we wandered on to speak of the journey for the morrow, which I proposed she should make upon "Charry," while Fra Miguel and myself accompanied her on foot. It was also agreed between us, that we should preserve the most rigid reserve and distance of manner in the Friar's presence, rarely auditing or speaking with each other. One only difficulty existed, which was by what pretence I should direct my steps to Aguaverde. But here again Donna Maria's ready wit suggested the expedient, as she said, laughing, "Are you not seeking a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady 'de los Dolores?'"

"So I am," said I. "Shame on me that I should have forgotten it till now!"

"But you never told me," said she, archly, "that you intended to enter 'an order?'"

"Certainly," said I, assuming the merry humour; "and so will I, on the very same day you take the veil."

"And now, holy man," said she, with difficulty repressing a fresh burst of laughter, "let us say, 'Good night.' Fra Miguel will awake at daybreak, and I see that is already

"Good night, sweet señor," said I, once again pressing [illegible] to my lips, and scarcely knowing when to relin-

quish them. A heavy sigh from the Friar, however, admonished me to hasten away; and I crept to my place, and lay down beside the now almost extinguished embers of our fire.

"What a good thought was that of the pilgrimage," said I, as I drew my cloak around me; and I remembered that "Chico's" beads, and his "book of offices," were still among my effects in the saddle-bags, and would greatly favour my assumption of the pious character. I then tried to recall some of my forgotten Latin. From this I reverted to thoughts of Donna Maria herself, and half wondered at the rapid strides we had accomplished in each other's confidence. At last I fell asleep, to dream of every incongruity and incoherency that ever haunted a diseased brain. Nunneries, with a crocodile for the Abbess, gave way to scenes in the Placers, where Nuns were gold-washing, and Friars riding down cataracts on caymans. From such pleasant realities a rough shake of Fra Miguel aroused me, as he cried, "When a man laughs so heartily in his sleep, he may chance to keep all the grave thoughts for his waking. Rise up, Señhor; the day is breaking. Let us profit by the cool hours to make our journey."

As day was breaking we set out for Bexar, in the manner I had suggested: Donna Maria riding, the Friar and myself, one either side of her, on foot. Resolved upon winning, so far as might be, Fra Miguel's confidence, I addressed my conversation almos exclusively to him, rarely speaking a word to my fair companion, and then only upon the commonest questions of the way.

As none of us had eaten since the day previous, nor was there any baiting-place till we reached Bexar, it was necessary to make the best of our way thither with all speed. The Fra knew the road perfectly, and by his skill in detecting the marks on trees, the position of certain rocks, and the course of the streams, gave me some insight into the acute qualities necessary for a Prairie traveller. These themes, too, furnished *the greater portion* of our conversation, which I am free to

own offered many a long interval of dreary silence. The Fra's thoughts dwelt gloomily on his late disaster, while Donna Maria and myself were condemned to the occasional exchange of a chance remark, or some question about the road.

Once or twice Fra Miguel questioned me on the subject of my own history; but ere I had proceeded any length in detailing my veracious narrative, an accidental word, or remark, would show that he was inattentive to what I was speaking, and only occupied by his own immediate reflections.

Why, then, trouble myself with biographical inventions, which failed to excite any interest? and so I relapsed into a silence plodding and moody as his own.

At length the path became too narrow for us all to go abreast, and as my duties were to guide Charry by the bridle, I became the companion of Maria by force of circumstances; still Fra Miguel kept up close behind, and however abstracted at other times, he now showed himself "wide awake" on the subject of our intercourse. Denied the pleasure of talking to each other, we could at least exchange glances; and this was a privilege no surveillance, however rigid, could deny us. These are small and insignificant details, which were of little moment at the time, and led to even less for the future; but I record them as the first stirrings of love in a heart which might have been deemed too intent upon its own cares to admit of others; and here let me observe that the taste for stratagem, — the little wiles and snares inspired by a first passion, are among the strongest incentives to its origin. It was the secrecy of our meeting at night, — the little difficulties of our intercourse by day, — the peril of discovery as we spoke together, — the danger of detection as we exchanged glances, that by giving us a common object, suggested a common feeling. Both engaged in the same warfare, how could we avoid sympathizing with each other. Then, there was that little "dash of romance" about our first meeting, so *auxiliary to the* tender passion; and, again, we were wander-

"You can make your penance here, young man, at the Convent of the missions. There are holy men who will give you all good counsel; and I will myself speak to them for you."

I was about to decline this polite intervention, when a quiet gesture from Donna Maria arrested my words, and made me accept the offer, with thanks.

Thus chatting, we reached the suburbs of Bexar, and soon entered the main street of that town; and here let me record a strange feature of the life of this land, which although one that I soon became accustomed to, had a most singular aspect to my eyes on first acquaintance. It was a hot and sultry night of June; the air as dry and parched as of a summer day in our English climate, and we found that the whole population had their beds disposed along the streets, and were sleeping for the benefit of the cool night air — al fresco. There was no moon, nor any lamp-light, but by the glimmering stars we could see this strange encampment, which barely left a passage in the middle for the mule carts.

Some of the groups were irresistibly droll: here was an old lady, with a yellow-and-red handkerchief round her head, snoring away, while a negro wench waved a plantain bough to and fro to keep off the musquitoes, which thronged the spot from the inducement of a little glimmering lamp to the Virgin over the bed. There was a thin lanthorn-jawed old fellow sipping his chocolate before he resigned himself to sleep. Now and then there would be a faint scream and a muttered apology, as some one, feeling his way to his nest, had fallen over the couch of a sleeper. Mothers were nursing babies, nurses were singing others to rest; social spirits were recalling the last strains of recent convivialities; while others, less genially given, were uttering their "Carambas" in all the vindictive anger of broken slumber. Now and then a devotional attitude might be detected, and even some little glimpses caught of some fair form making her toilet for the night, and throwing back her dishevelled hair, to peer at the *passing strangers*.

Such were the scenes that even a brief transit presented: a longer sojourn, and a little more light, had doubtless discovered still more singular ones.

We halted at the gate of a large gloomy-looking building, which the friar informed me was the "Venta Nazionale," the chief inn of the town; and by dint of much knocking, and various interlocutions between Fra Miguel and a black, four stories high, the gates were at length opened. Faint, hungry, and tired, I had hoped that we should have supped in company, and thus recompensed me for my share of the successful issue of the journey; but the Fra, giving his orders hastily, wished me an abrupt "good night," and led his niece up the narrow stairs, leaving me and my mare in the gloomy entrance, like things whose services were no longer needed.

"This may be Texan gratitude, Fra Miguel," said I to myself, "but certainly you never brought it from your own country." Meanwhile the negro, after lighting the others up stairs, returned to where I was, and perhaps not impressed by any high notions of my quality, or too sleepy to think much about the matter, sat down on a stone bench, and looked very much as if about to compose himself to another doze. I was in no mood of gentleness, and so bestowing a hearty kick upon my black "brother," I told him to show me the way to the stable at once. The answer to this somewhat rude summons was a strange one, — he gave a kind of grin that showed all his teeth, and made a species of hissing noise, like "Cheet, cheet," said rapidly — a performance I had never witnessed before, nor, for certain reasons, have I any fancy to witness again.

"Do you hear me, black fellow," cried I, tapping his bullet-head with the end of my heavy whip, pretty much as one does a tavern-table to summon the waiter.

"Cheet, cheet, cheet," cried he again, but with redoubled energy.

"Confound your jargon," said I, angrily, "get up out of that, and lead the way to the stable." This speech I accompanied by another admonition from my foot, given, I am

ing, side by side, in a silent forest, with only one other near us. Would we could have disposed of him, too! I shame to say it, but in honest truth, I often wished that he had followed the Mexican!

We halted during the great heat of the day, and the Fra once more "rigging" out his capote, for a hammock, Donna Maria lay down for the siesta, while I cut grass for Charry, and rubbed her down. Long fasting had made us all more disposed to silence, so that a few monosyllables were all that passed. When the time came to resume the road, I am proud to say that the Fra bore his privations with less equanimity than did we. His sighs grew heavy and frequent; any accidental interruption on the road evoked unmistakeable signs of irritation; he even expostulated with certain saints, whose leaden images decorated his sombrero, as to the precise reasons for which his present sufferings were incurred, and altogether, as hunger pinched, showed a more rebellious spirit than his holy discourses of the preceding evening could have led me to suspect.

One time, he charged his calamities to the score of having eaten turtle, which was only half fish, on a Friday; at another, it was upon that unlucky day the journey had been begun; then, he remembered that the Mexican was only a half-breed, who possibly, if baptized at all, was only an irregular kind of a Christian, admitted into the fold by some stray missionary — more trapper than priest. Then, he bethought him, that his patron, Saint Michel of Pavia, was of an uncertain humour, and often tormented his votaries, by way of trying their fidelity. These various doubts assumed the form of open grumblings, which certainly inspired very different sentiments in Donna Maria and myself than edification. As evening closed in, and darkness favoured us, these ghostly lamentations afforded us many a low, quiet laugh; a soft pressure of the hand, which now, by mere accident of course, she had let fall near me, would sometimes show how we concurred in our sentiments, till at length, as the thicker gloom of night fell around, such was our unanimity, that her

hand remained clasped in my own without any further attempt to remove it.

If the Fra's gratitude burst forth eloquently as we came in sight of some spangled lights glittering through the gloom, our sensations were far more akin to disappointment.

"Bexar, at last! praised be St. Michel!" exclaimed he. "It has been a long and dreary journey." Here I pressed Maria's hand, and she returned the pressure.

"Two days of disaster and sore suffering!" Another squeeze of the Señhora's fingers.

"A time I shall never forget," muttered he.

"Nor I," whispered I, to my fair companion.

"A season of trouble and distress!" quoth the Fra.

"Of love and happiness!" muttered I.

"And now, my worthy young friend," said he, addressing me, "as we are so soon to part — for yonder is Bexar — how shall we best show our gratitude? Would you like a 'novena' to 'Our Lady of Tears,' whose altar is here? or, shall we vow a candle to St. Nicomede of Terapia?"

"Thanks, holy father, there is no need for either; mine was a slight service, more than requited by the pleasure of travelling in your company, and that of this pious maiden. I have learned many a goodly lesson by the way, and will think over them as I wander on my future pilgrimage."

"And whither may that tend, Señhor?"

"To the shrine of 'Our Lady of Sorrows,' at Aguaverde, by the help of St. Francis."

"Aguaverde!" exclaimed Fra Miguel, with a voice that bespoke anything rather than pleasure; "it is a long and a dangerous journey, young man!"

"The greater the merit, father!"

"Trackless wastes, and deep rivers; hostile Indians, and even more cruel half-breeds. These are some of the perils," said he, in a voice of warning; but a gentle pressure from *the Señhora's fingers* was more than an answer to such *terrors.*

traits of ungovernable passion, some, by the querulous irritability of peevish childhood, and some by the fatuous vacuity of idiocy; and here am I, gazing upon all this, and speculating, by the aid of a little bit of broken-looking-glass, how long it is probable that I shall retain the "regulation" number of the human features.

Ah, you gentlemen of England, who live at home at ease, may smile at such miseries; but let me tell you, that however impertinent you might deem him who told you "to follow your nose," the impossibility of compliance is a yet heavier infliction, and it was with a trembling eagerness that each morning, as I awoke, I consulted the map of my face, to be sure that I was master of each geographical feature.

While all who may break a leg or cut a blood-vessel are reckoned fit subjects to expose to the risk of this contagion, the most guarded measures are adopted to protect the world without the walls from every risk. Not only is every leper denied access to his friends and family, but even written communication is refused him, while sentinels are stationed at short intervals around the grounds, with orders to fire upon any who should attempt an escape.

Here then was I in a gaol, with the danger of a horrible disease superadded. Algebraically, my case stood thus: — Letting the letter P represent a prison, L the leprosy, and N my nose, P + L — N, being equal to any given number of deaths by torture. Such was my case, such my situation; while of the past, by what chain of events I came to be thus a prisoner, I knew nothing. A little memoir at the head of my bed set forth that I was "a case of punctured wound in the thorax," with several accessory advantages, not over intelligible by my ignorance, but which I guessed to imply, that if the doctor didn't finish me off at once, there was every chance of my slipping away by a lingering malady — some one of those "chest affections" — that make the fortunes of doctors, but are seldom so profitable to the patients.

One fact was, however, very suggestive. It was above four *months since* the date of my admission to the hospital, a cir-

cumstance that vouched for the gravity of my illness, as well as showing what number of events might have occurred in the interval.

Four months! and where was Donna Maria now? Had she forgotten me — forgotten the terrible scene on the Colorado — forgotten the starlit night in the forest? Had they left me without any interest in my future — deserted me, wounded — perhaps dying? — a sad return for the services I had rendered them! That Fra Miguel should have done this would have caused me no surprise; but the Señhora — she who sprang by a bound into intimacy with me, and called me "brother!" Alas! if this were so, what faith could be placed in woman?

In vain I sought some information on these points from those around me. My Spanish was not the very purest Castilian, it is true; but here, another and greater obstacle to knowledge existed — no one cared anything for the past, and very little for the future — the last event that held a place in their memory was the day of their admission — the fell malady was the centre round which all thoughts revolved, and I was regarded as a kind of visionary when asking about circumstances that occurred before I entered the hospital. There were vague and shadowy rumours about me and my adventure, so much I could find out; but whatever these were, scarcely two agreed on — not one cared. Some said I had killed a priest — others averred it was a negro — a few opined that I had done both; and an old mulatto woman, with a face like a target, the bull's eye being represented by where the nose ought to be, related a more connected narrative about my having stolen a horse, and being overtaken by a negro slave of the owner, who rescued the animal and stabbed *me*.

All the stories tallied in one particular, which was in representing me as a fellow of the most desperate character and determination, and who cared as little for shedding blood as spilling water — traits, I am bound to acknowledge, which *never appeared* to lower me in general esteem. Of course, all *inquiries as to* my horse, poor Charry — my precious saddle-

free to own, with all the irritable impatience of a thirty hours' fast.

The words had scarcely passed my lips, ere the fellow sprang to his legs, and with a cry like the scream of an infuriated beast, dashed at me. I threw out my arm as a guard, but stooping beneath it, he plunged a knife into my side and fled. I heard the heavy bang of the great door resound as he rushed out, and then fell to the ground, weltering in my blood!

I made a great effort to cry out, but my voice failed me; the blood ran fast from my wound, and a chill, sickening sensation crept over, that I thought must be "death." "'Tis hard to die thus," was the thought that crossed me, and it was the last effort of consciousness, ere I swooned into insensibility.

CHAPTER II.

The Lazaretto of Bexar.

KIND-HEARTED reader; you, who have sympathized with so many of the rubs that Fortune has dealt us; who have watched us with a benevolent interest in our warfare with an adverse destiny; who have marked our struggles, and witnessed our defeats; will surely compassionate our sad fate when we tell you that when the curtain next rises on our drama, it presents us no longer what we had been!

Con Cregan, the light-hearted vagrant, paddling his lone canoe down life's stream in joyous merriment, himself sufficing to himself, his eyes ever upward as his hopes were onward, his crest an eagle's, and his motto "higher," was no more. He had gone — vanished, been dissipated into thin air; and in his place there sat, too weak to walk, a poor emaciated creature, with shaven head and shrunken limbs, a very wreck of humanity, pale, sallow, and miserable as fever *and flannel could* paint him.

Yes, gentle reader, under the shade of a dwarf fig-tree, in the Leper Hospital of Bexar, I sat, attired in a whole suit of flannel, of a pale brown tint, looking like a faded flea; all my gay spirits fled, and my very identity merged into the simple fact that I was known as "Convalescent, No. 303," an announcement which, for memory's sake perhaps, was stamped upon the front of my night-cap.

Few people are fortunate enough not to remember the strange jumble of true and false, the incoherent tissue of fact and fancy which assails the first moments of recovery from illness. It is a pitiable period, with its thronging thoughts, all too weighty for the light brain that should bear them. You follow your ideas like an ill-mounted horseman in a hunt; no sooner have you caught a glimpse of the game than it is lost again: on you go, wearied by the pace, but never cheered by success; often tumbling into a slough, missing your way, and mistaking the object of pursuit; such are the casualties in either case, and they are not enviable ones.

Now, lest I should seem to be a character of all others I detest, a grumbler without cause, let me ask the reader to sit beside me for a few seconds on this bench, and look with me at the prospect around him. Yonder, that large white building, with grated windows, gaol-like and sad, is the Leper Hospital of Bexar, an institution originally intended for the sick of that one malady, but, under the impression of its being contagious, generously extended to those labouring under any other disease. The lepers are that host who sit in groups upon the grass, at cards or dice, or walk in little knots of two and three. Their shambling gait and crippled figure — the terrible evidence of their malady — twisted limbs, contorted into every horrible variety of lameness, hands with deficient fingers, faces without noses, are the ordinary symbols. The voices, too, are either husky and unnatural, or reduced to a thin reedy treble, like the wail of an infant. Worse than all, far more awful to contemplate, to him exposed to such *companionship* — their minds would appear more diseased *than even their* bodies; some, evincing this aberration

what became of him? when did he leave us? to whom did he say farewell?

If there was something unspeakably sad in the solitude of such a fate, there was that also which nerved the heart by a sense of Self-sufficiency — the very brother of Independence; and this thought gave me courage as I looked over the grassy embankment, and peered into the gloomy fosse, which now, in the indistinct light, seemed far deeper than ever. A low marshy tract, undrained and uninhabitable, surrounded the "Lazaretto" for miles; and if this insalubrious neighbourhood assisted in keeping up the malaria of fever, it compensated, on the other hand, by interposing an unpopulated district between the sick and the healthy.

These dreary wastes, pathless and untrodden, were a kind of fabulous region among the patients for all kind of horrors, peopled as the fancy of each dictated by the spirits of departed "Léperos," by venomous serpents and cobras, or by escaped galley-slaves, who led a life of rapine and murder. The flitting jack-o'-lantern that often skimmed along the surface, the wild cry of the plover, the dreary night wind sighing over miles of plain, aided these superstitions, and convinced many whose stubborn incredulity demanded corroboration from the senses. As for myself, if very far from crediting the tales I had so often listened to, the theme left its character of gloom upon my mind, and it was with a cold shudder that I strained my eyes over the wide distance from which a heavy exhalation was already rising. Determined to derive comfort from every source, I bethought me that the misty fog would assist my concealment, as if it were worth while to pursue me through a region impregnated with all the vapours of disease! The bell had ceased: the bang of the great iron wicket had resounded, and all was still. I hesitated, I know not why: a moment before, my mind was made up; and now, it seemed like self-destruction to go on! Here was life! a sad and terrible existence truly; but was the dark grave better? or, if it were, had I the right to make the choice? this was a subtlety *that had not* occurred till now. The dull tramp of the patrol

routed my musings, as in quick time a party advanced up the alley towards me. They were not visible from the darkness, but the distance could not be great, and already I could hear the corporal urging them forward, as the mists were rising, and a deadly fog gathering over the earth. Any longer delay now, and my project must be abandoned for ever, seeing that my lingering outside the walls would expose me to close surveillance for the future.

I arose suddenly, and advanced to the very edge of the cliff: would that I could only have scanned the depth below and seen where I was about to go! Alas! darkness was on all; a foot beneath where I stood all was black and undistinguishable.

The patrol were now about thirty paces from me; another instant and I should be taken! I clasped my hands together convulsively, and with drawn-in breath and clenched lips, I bent my knees to spring. Alas, they would not! my strength failed me at this last moment, and instead of a leap, my limbs relaxed, and tottering under me, gave way. I lost my balance, and fell over the cliff! Grasping the grassy surface with the energy of despair, I tore tufts of long grass and fern as I fell down — down — down — till consciousness left me to be rallied again into life by a terrible "squash" into a reedy swamp at the bottom. Up to my waist in duck-weed and muddy water, I soon felt, however, that I had sustained no other injury than a shock: nay, even fancied that the concussion had braced my nerves; and as I looked up at the dark mass of wall above me, I knew that my fall must have been terrific.

Neither my bodily energy, nor my habiliments, favoured me in escaping from this ditch: but I did rescue myself at last and then remembering that I must reach some place of refuge before day broke, I set out over the moor, my only pilotage being the occasionally looking back at the lights of the hospital, and in sailor-fashion using them as my point of departure. *When creeping* along the walks of the Lazaretto, I was

bags, my rifle, my bowie knife, and my "harper's-ferry," would have proved less than useless — actually absurd. The patients would have reckoned such questions as little vagaries of mental wandering, and the servants of the house never replied to anything.

My next anxiety was, when should I be at liberty? The doctor, when I asked him, gave a peculiar grin, and said, "We cannot spare you, amigo; we shall want to have a look at your pericardium one of these days. *I* say it is perforated — Don Emanuel says not. Time will tell who's right."

"You mean when I'm dead, señhor, of course?" cried I, not fancying the chance of resolving the difficulties by being carved alive.

"Of course I do," said he. "Yours is a very instructive case; and I shall take care that your heart and a portion of the left lung be carefully injected, and preserved in the museum."

"May you live a thousand years!" said I, bowing my gratitude, while a chill crept over me that I thought I should have fainted.

I have already mentioned that sentries were placed at intervals round the walls, to prevent escape, a precaution which, were one to judge from the desolated and crippled condition of the inmates, savoured of over care. A few were able to crawl along upon crutches, the majority were utterly helpless, while the most active were only capable of creeping up the bank which formed the boundary of the grounds, to look down into the moat beneath, a descent of some twenty feet, but which, to imaginations such as theirs, was a gulf like the crater of a volcano.

Whenever a little group then would station themselves on the "heights," as they were called, and gaze timidly into the depths below, the guards, far from dispersing them, saw that no better lesson could be administered than what their own fears suggested, and prudently left them to the admonitions of their terrors. I remembered this fact, and resolved to *profit by it.* If death were to be my lot, it could not come

anywhere with more horrors than here; so that happen what might, I resolved to make an effort at escape. The sentry's bullet had few terrors for one who saw himself surrounded by such objects of suffering and misery, and who daily expected to be one of their number. Were the leap to kill me, a circumstance that in my weak and wounded condition I judged far from unlikely, it was only anticipating a few days — and what days were they!

Such were my calculations, made calmly and with reflection. Not that I was weary of life; were the world but open to me, I felt I should resume all my former zest, in its sayings and doings: nay, I even fancied that the season of privation would give a higher colour to my enjoyment of it; and I knew that the teachings of adversity are not the least useful accessories of him whose wits must point the road to fortune. True is it, the emergencies of life evoke the faculties, and develope the resources, as the storm and the shipwreck display the hardy mariner. Who knows, Con, but good luck may creep in even through a punctured wound in the thorax!

As the day closed, the patients were always recalled by a bell, and patrol parties of soldiers went round to see if by accident any yet lingered without the walls. The performance of duty was, however, most slovenly, since, as I have already said, escape never occurred to those whose apathy of mind and infirmity of body had made them indifferent to everything. I lingered, then, in a distant alley as the evening began to fall, and when the bell rung out its dismal summons, I trembled to think — was it the last time I should ever hear it! It was a strange thrill of mingled hope and terror. Where should I be the next evening at that hour! Free, and at liberty — a wanderer wherever fancy might lead me, or the occupant of some narrow bed beneath the earth, sleeping the sleep that knows no waking? and, if so, who could less easily be missed than him who had neither friend, nor family, nor fortune. I felt that my departure, like that of some insignificant guest, would meet notice from none: not one to ask

roasted an entire side, had contented themselves with some steaks off the quarter. Upon this I feasted luxuriously, securing a sufficient provision to last me for the next two or three days.

In this way I continued to travel for eight entire days, each successive one hoping to overtake the party in advance; and if disappointed in this expectation, well pleased with the good luck that had supplied me so far with food, and made my journey safe and pleasant, for it was both. A single beast of prey I never met with, nor even a serpent larger than the common green snake, which is neither venomous nor bold; and, as for pleasure, I was free. Was not that alone happiness for him who had been a prisoner among the "Léperos" of Bexar?

On the ninth day of my wandering, certain unmistakable signs indicated that I was approaching the verge of the forest; the grass became deeper, the wood less dense; the undergrowth, too, showed the influence of winds and currents of air. These, only appreciable by him who has watched with anxious eyes every little change in the aspect of Nature, became at last evident to the least observant in the thickened bark, and the twisted branches of the trees, on which the storms of winter were directed. Shall I own it! — my heart grew heavy at these signs, boding, as they did, another change of scene, and to what? perhaps the bleak prairie stretching away in dreary desolation! Perhaps, some such tract of swampy moor, where forests once had stood, but now, lying in mere waste of rottenness and corruption — "clearings," as they are called — the little intervals which hard industry plants amid universal wildness, I could not hope for, since I had often heard that no settlers ever selected these places, to which access by water was difficult, and the roads few and bad. What, then, was to come next? Not the sea coast — *that* must be miles away to the eastward; not the chain of the Rocky Mountains — they lay equally far to the west.

While yet revolving these thoughts, I reached the verge of the wood; and suddenly, and without anything which

might apprise me of this singular change, I found my
standing on the verge of a great bluff of land overlooking
apparently boundless plain. The sight thus unexpect
presented of a vast prairie — for such it was — was o
whelming in its intense interest. My position, from a he
of some seven or eight hundred feet, gave me an unin
rupted view over miles and miles of surface. Towards th
west a ridge of rugged mountains could be seen, but to
south and east a low flat horizon bounded the distance.
surface of this great tract was covered for a short space by
cedars, apparently killed by a recent fire; beyond tha
tall, rank grass grew, through which I could trace someth
like a road. This was, as I afterwards learned, a buff
trail, these animals frequently marching in close column w
in search of water. The sun was setting as I looked,
gilded the whole vast picture with its yellow glory; but
sunk beneath the horizon, and permitted a clearer view of
scene, I could perceive that everything — trees, grass, e
itself — presented one uniform dry, burnt-up appearance.

Not a creature of any kind was seen to move over this g
plain; not a wing cleaved the air above; not a sound br
the stillness beneath. It was a solitude the most comple
ever conceived — grand and imposing! How my heart s
within me as I sat and looked, thinking I was there al
without one creature near me, to linger out, perhaps, some
days or hours of life, and die unseen, unwatched, unc
for! And to this sad destiny had ambition brought me! W
it not for the craving desire to become something above
station — to move in a sphere to which neither my birth
my abilities gave me any title — and I should be now
humble peasant, living by my daily labour in my na
land, my thoughts travelling in the worn track those of
neighbours journeyed, and I neither better nor worse off t
they.

And for this wish — insensate, foolish, as it was —
expiation is indeed heavy. I hid my head within my ha
and tried to pray, but I could not. The mind haras

barely able to move; and now, such a good ally is a strong "will," I stepped out boldly and manfully.

As I walked on, the night cleared: a light fresh breeze dissipated the vapour, and refreshed me as I went; while overhead, myriads of bright stars shone out, and served to guide me on the trackless waste. If I often felt fatigue stealing over me, a thought of the Lazaretto and its fearful inmates nerved me to new efforts. Sometimes, so possessed did I become with these fears, that I actually increased my speed to a run, and thus exerting myself to the very utmost, I made immense progress, and ere day began to break, found myself at the margin of the moor, and the entrance to a dense forest, which I remembered often to have seen of a clear evening from the garden of the Lazaretto. With what gratitude did I accept that leafy shade which seemed to promise me its refuge! I threw my arms around a tree in the ecstasy of my delight, and felt, that now indeed I had gained a haven of rest and safety. By good fortune, too, I came upon a pathway; a small piece of board nailed to a tree bore the name of a village; but this I could not read in the half light; still it was enough that I was sure of a beaten track, and could not be lost in the dense intricacies of a pine-forest.

The change of scene encouraged me to renewed exertion, and I began to feel that so far from experiencing fatigue, each mile I travelled supplied me with greater energy, and that my strength rose each hour, as I left the Lazaretto farther behind me.

"Ah, Con, my boy, fortune has not taken leave of you yet!" said I, as I discovered that my severe exercise, far from being injurious, as I had feared, was already bringing back the glow of health to my frame, and spirit to my heart.

There is something unspeakably calming in the solitude of a forest, unlike the lone sensations inspired by the sea or the prairie; the feeling is one of peaceful quietude. The tempered sun-light stealing through the leaves and boughs entangled; — the giant trunks that tell of centuries ago — the *short smooth mossy* turf through which the tiny rivulet runs

[illegible] alleys, or [illegible] instead of wan- [illegible] as when contem- [illegible] heart here falls [illegible] with the little world [illegible]

[illegible] a tree, at [illegible] and I slept as only a [illegible] under the shade [illegible] It must have [illegible] obliquely [illegible] I rose: [illegible] those [illegible] and [illegible] came after [illegible] spot in the [illegible] fragments [illegible] of black bread [illegible] agreed that [illegible] guarded the spot; [illegible] I sat [illegible] probably, [illegible] supper. [illegible] a de- [illegible] and I resolved on [illegible] but being too [illegible] The next morning I [illegible] was preceded by [illegible] of any other, with [illegible] and in perhaps [illegible] I walked [illegible] with scarcely an interval of rest; but, although the marks [illegible] showed me my con- [illegible] I did not succeed in overtaking them. To- [illegible] I again came upon them on the same ground, which was even more abundantly provided than the preceding one. They appeared to have killed a buck, and though having

various conflicting thoughts is not in the best mood for supplication. I felt like the criminal of whom I had once read, that when the confessor came to visit him the night before his execution, seemed eager and attentive for a while, but at last acknowledged that his thoughts were centered upon one only theme — escape! "To look steadfastly at the next world, you must extinguish the light of this one;" and how difficult is that! — how hard to close every chink and fissure through which hope may dart a ray! — hope of life, hope of renewing the struggle in which we are so often defeated, and where even the victory is without value.

"Be it so," sighed I, at last; "the game is up!" and I lay down at the foot of a rock to die. My strength, long sustained by expectation, had given way at last, and I felt that the hour of release could not be distant. I drew my hand across my eyes — I am ashamed to own there were tears there — and just then, as if my vision had been cleared by the act, I saw, or thought I saw, in the plain beneath, the glittering sparkle of flame. Was it the reflection of a star, of which thousands were now studding the sky, in some pool of rain water? No! it was real fire, which now, from one red spark, burst forth into a great blaze, rolling out volumes of black smoke, which rose like a column into the air.

Were they Indians who made it, or trappers? or could it be the party in whose track I had so long been following; and, if so, by what path had they descended? Speculation is half-brother to hope. No sooner had I begun to canvass this proposition, than it aroused my drooping energies, and rallied my failing courage.

I set about to seek for some clue to the descent, and by the moonlight, which was now full and strong, I detected foot-tracks in the clayey soil near the verge of the cliff. A little after I found a narrow pathway, which seemed to lead down the face of the bluff. The trees were scratched, too, in many places with marks familiar to prairie travellers, but which to me only betokened the fact that human hands had been at *work upon them.* I gained courage by these, which, at least,

I knew were not "Indian signs," no more than the foot-tracks were those of Indian feet.

The descent was tedious, and often perilous; the path, stopping abruptly short at rocks, from which the interval to the next footing should be accomplished by a spring, or a drop of several feet, was increased in danger by the indistinct light. In the transit I received many a sore bruise, and ere I reached the bottom my flannel drapery was reduced to a string of rags which would have done no credit to a scarecrow.

When looking from the top of the cliff, the fire appeared to be immediately at its foot; but now I perceived it stood about half a mile off in the plain. Thither I bent my steps, half fearing, half hoping, what might ensue. So wearied was I by the fatigue of the descent, added to the long day's journey, that even in this short space I was often obliged to halt and take rest. Exhaustion, hunger, and lassitude weighed me down, till I went along with that half-despairing effort a worn-out swimmer makes as his last before sinking.

A more pitiable object it would not be easy to picture. The blood oozing from my wound, re-opened by the exertion, had stained my flannel dress, which, ragged and torn, gave glimpses of a figure reduced almost to a skeleton. My beard was long, adding to the seeming length of my gaunt and lanthorn jaws, blue with fatigue and fasting. My shoes were in tatters, and gave no protection to my bleeding feet; while my hands were torn and cut by grasping the rocks and boughs in my descent. Half stumbling, half tottering, I came onward till I found myself close to the great fire, at the base of a mound — a Prairie roll, as it is called — which formed a shelter against the east wind.

Around the immense blaze sat a party, some of whom in shadow, others in strong light, presented a group the strangest ever my eyes beheld. Bronzed and bearded countenances, whose fierce expression glowed fiercer in the ruddy glare of the fire, were set off by costumes the oddest imaginable.

Many wore coats of undressed sheepskin, with tall caps of *the same material*; others had ragged uniforms of differ-

services. One or two were dressed in "ponchos" of red brown cloth, like Mexicans, and some, again, had a kind of buff coat, studded with copper ornaments,—a costume often seen among the half-breeds. All agreed in one feature of equipment, which was a broad leather belt or girdle, in which were fastened various shining implements, of which a small pick-axe and a hammer were alone distinguishable where I stood. Several muskets were piled near them, and on the scorched boughs of the cedars hung a little armoury of cutlasses, pistols, and "bowies," from which I was able to estimate the company at some twenty-eight or thirty in number. Packs and knapsacks, with some rude cooking utensils, were strewn around; but the great carcass of a deer which I saw in the flames, supported by a chevaux-de-frise of ramrods, was the best evidence that the cares of "cuisine" did not demand any unnecessary aid from "casseroles."

A couple of great earthen pitchers passed rapidly from hand to hand round the circle, and, by the assistance of some blackhead, served to beguile the time while the "roast" was being prepared.

Creeping noiselessly nearer, I gained a little clump of brushwood scarcely more than half-a-dozen paces off, and then lay myself down to listen what language they were speaking. At first the whole buzz seemed one unmeaning jargon, more like the tongue of an Indian tribe than anything else; but as I listened I could detect words of French, Spanish, and German. Eager to make out some clue to what class they might belong, I leaned forward on a bough and listened attentively. A stray word — a chance phrase, could I but catch so much, would be enough; and I bent my ear with the most watchful intensity. The spot I occupied was the crest of the little ridge, or "Prairie roll," and gave me a perfect view over the group, while the black smoke rolling upwards effectually concealed *me* from *them*.

As I listened, I heard a deep husky voice say something in English. It was only an oath, but it smacked of my country, *and set my heart* a-throbbing powerfully. I lay out upon the

branch to catch what might follow, when smash went the frail timber, and, with a cry of terror, down I rolled behind them. In a second every one was on his legs, while a cry of "The jaguars! the jaguars!" resounded on all sides. The sudden shock over, their discipline seemed perfect; for the whole party had at once betaken themselves to their arms, and stood in a hollow square, prepared to receive any attack. Meanwhile, the smoke and the falling rubbish effectually shut me out from view. As these cleared away they caught sight of me, and truly never was a formidable file of musketry directed upon a more pitiable object. Such seemed their own conviction; for, after a second or two passed in steady contemplation of me, the whole group burst out into a roar of savage laughter. "What is't?" "It's not human!" being the exclamations which, in more than one strange tongue, were uttered.

Unable to speak, in part from terror, in part from shock, I sat up on my knees, and, gesticulating with my hands, implored their mercy, and bespoke my own defencelessness. I conclude that I made a very sorry exhibition, for again the laughter burst forth in louder tones than before, when one, taking a brand of the burning firewood, came nearer to examine me. He threw down his torch, and springing backward with horror, screamed out, a "lépero!" a "lépero!" In a moment every musket was again raised to the shoulder, and directed towards me.

"I'm not a lépero — never was!" cried I, in Spanish. "I'm a poor Englishman who has made his escape from the Lazaretto." I could not utter more, but fell powerless to the earth.

"I know him; we were messmates," cried a gruff voice. "Halt! avast there! don't fire! I say, my lad, crawl over to leeward of the fire. There, that will do. Dash a bucket of water over him, Perez."

Perez obeyed with a vengeance, for I was soaked to the skin, and at the same time exposed to the scorching glare of

the great fire, where I steamed away like a swamp at sundown.

"A'n't you Cregan, I say?" cried the same English voice which spoke before: "a'n't you little Con, as we used to call you?"

"Yes," said I, overjoyed by the recognition, without knowing by whom it was made; "I am the little Con you speak of."

"Ah! I remembered your voice the moment I heard it," said he. "Don't you remember me?"

"Caramba!" broke in a savage-looking Spaniard, "we're not going to catch a leprosy for the sake of your reminiscences. Tell the fellow to move off, or I'll send a bullet through him."

"And I'll follow you."

"And I — and I," cried two or three more, who, suiting the action to the speech, threw back the pan of the flint-muskets to examine the priming.

"And shall I tell you what I'll do?" said the Englishman. "I'll lay the first fellow's skull open with this hanger that fires a shot at him."

"Will you so?" said a thin, athletic fellow, springing to his legs, and drawing a long narrow-bladed knife from his girdle.

"A truce there, Rivas," said another, "would you quarrel with the Capitan for a miserable lépero?"

"He's not a Capitan of my making," said Rivas, sulkily.

"I don't care of whose making," said the Englishman, in his broken Spanish; "I'm the leader of this expedition — if any one deny it, let him stand out and say so. If half-a-dozen of you deny it, come out one by one — I ask nothing better than to show you who's the best man here."

A low muttering followed this speech, but whether it were of admiration or anger, I could not determine. Meanwhile my own resolve was formed, as, gathering my limbs together, I *rose upon one* knee and said —

Before day broke, I was aroused by the noise of approaching departure; the band were strapping on knapsacks, slinging muskets, and making other preparations for the march. Halkett, as their captain, carrying nothing beyond his weapons, and in his air and manner assuming all the importance of command.

The "Lépero," as I was called, was ordered to follow the column at about a hundred paces to the rear; but as I was spared all burthen in compassion to my weak state, I readily compounded for this invidious position, by the benefits it conferred. A rude meal of rye bread and cold venison, with some coffee, made our breakfast, and away we started; our path lying through the vast Prairie I have already spoken of.

As during my state of "quarantine," which lasted seven entire days, we continued to march along over a dreary tract of monotonous desolation — nothing varying the dull uniformity of each day's journey, save the chance sight of a distant herd of buffaloes, the faint traces of an Indian war-party, or the blackened embers of a bivouack, — I will not weary my readers by dwelling on my own reflections as I plodded on: enough, when I say, they were oftener sad than otherwise. The uncertainty regarding the object of my fellow-travellers, harassed my mind by a thousand odd conjectures. It was clear they were not merchants, neither could they be hunters, still less a "war-party;" — one of those marauding bands, which on the Texan frontier of Mexico levy "black mail" upon the villagers, on the plea of a pretended protection against the Indians. Although well armed, neither their weapons, their discipline, nor, still less, their numbers, argued in favour of this suspicion. What they could possibly be, then, was an insurmountable puzzle to me. I knew they were called Gambusinos — nothing more. Supposing that some of my readers may not be wiser than I then was, let me take this opportunity, while traversing the prairie, to say in a few words what they were.

The Gambusinos are the gold-seekers of the New World; *a class, who in* number and importance, divide society with

the "Vaqueros," the cattle-dealers, into two almost equal sections. Too poor to become possessors of mines; without capital for enterprise on a larger scale, they form bands of wandering discoverers, traversing the least-known districts of the Sonora, and spending years of life in the wildest recesses of the Rocky Mountains. Associating together, generally, from circumstances purely accidental, they form little communities, subject to distinct laws; and however turbulent and rebellious under ordinary control, beneath the sway of the self-chosen leaders, they are reputed to be submissive and obedient.

Their skill is, as may be judged, rude as their habits. They rarely carry their researches to any depth beneath the surface; some general rules are all their guidance, and these are easily acquired. They are all familiar with the fact, that the streams, which descend from the Rocky Mountains, either towards the Atlantic or Pacific, carry in their autumnal floods vast masses of earth, which form deposits in the plains; that these deposits are often charged with precious ores, and sometimes contain great pieces of pure gold. They know, besides, that the quartz rock is the usual bed where the precious metals are found; and that these rocks form spurs from the large mountains, easily known, because they are never clothed by vegetation, and called in their phraseology "Crestones."

A sharp short stroke of the "barreta," the iron-shod staff of the Gambusino, soon shivers the rock where treasure is suspected; and the fragments being submitted to the action of a strong fire, the existence of gold is at once tested. Often the mere stroke of the barreta will display the shining lustre of the metal without more to do. Such is, for the most part, the extent of their skill.

There are, of course, gradations even here; and some will distinguish themselves above their fellows in the detection of profitable sources and rich "crestones," while others rarely rise above the rank of mere "washers," — men employed to sift the sands and deposits of the rivers in which the chief product is *gold-dust*.

Such, then, is the life of a "Gambusino." In this pursuit he traverses the vast continent of South America from east to west, crossing torrents, scaling cliffs, descending precipices, braving hunger, thirst, heat, and snow, encountering hostile Indians, and the not less terrible bands of rival adventurers, contesting for existence with the wild animals of the desert, and generally at last paying with his life the price of his daring intrepidity! Few, indeed, are ever seen as old men among their native villages; nearly all have found their last rest beneath the scorching sand of the prairie.

Upon every other subject than that of treasure seeking, their minds were a perfect blank. For *them*, the varied resources of a land abounding in the products of every clime, had no attraction. On the contrary, the soil which grew the maize, indigo, cotton, the sugar-cane, coffee, the olive, and the vine, seemed sterile and barren, since in such regions no *gold* was ever found. The wondrous fertility of that series of terraces which, on the Andes, unite the fruits of the torrid zone with the lichens of the icy north, had no value in the estimation of men who acknowledged but one wealth, and recognised but one idol. *Their* hearts turned from the glorious vegetation of this rich garden to the dry courses of the torrents that fissure the Cordilleras, or the stony gorges that intersect the Rocky Mountains.

The life of wild and varied adventure, too, that they led, was associated with these deserted and trackless wastes. To them, civilization presented an aspect of slavish subjection and dull uniformity; while in the very vicissitudes of their successes there was the excitement of gambling—rich to-day, they vowed a lamp of solid gold to the "Virgin"—to-morrow, in beggary, they braved the terrors of sacrilege, to steal from the very altar they had themselves decorated. What strange and wondrous narratives did they recount as we wandered over that swelling prairie!

Many avowed that their own misdeeds had first driven *them to the life of* the deserts; and one, who had lived for

years a prisoner among the Choctaws, confessed that his heart still lingered with the time when he had sat as a chief beside the war-fire, and planned stratagems against the tribe of the rival Pawnees. To men of hardy and energetic temperament, recklessness has an immense fascination. Life is so often in peril, they cease to care much for whatever endangers it, and thus, through all their stories, the one feeling ever predominated, — a careless indifference to every risk, coupled with a most resolute conduct in time of danger.

I soon managed to make myself a favourite with this motley assemblage: my natural aptitude to pick up language, aided by what I already knew of French and German, assisted me to a knowledge of Spanish and Portuguese; while from a "half-breed" I acquired a sufficiency of the Indian dialect in use throughout the Lower Prairies. I was fleet of foot, besides being a good shot with the rifle, — qualities of more request among my companions than many gifts of a more brilliant order; and lastly, my skill in cookery, which I derived from my education on board the *Firefly*, won me high esteem and much honour. My life was, therefore, far from unpleasant. The monotony of the tract over which we marched was more than compensated for by the marvellous tales that beguiled the way. One only drawback existed on my happiness, and yet that was sufficient to embitter many a lonely hour of the night, and cast a shade over many a joyous hour of the day. I am almost ashamed to confess what that source of sorrow was, the more as perhaps, my kind reader will already fancy he has anticipated my grief, and say, "It was the remembrance of Donna Maria; the memory of *her* I was never to see more." Alas, no! It was a feeling far more selfish than this afflicted me. The plain fact is, I was called "The Lépero." By no other name would my companions know or acknowledge me. It was thus that they first addressed me, and so they would not take the trouble to change my appellation. Not that, indeed, I dared to insinuate a wish upon the subject: such a hint would have been too bold a stroke to hazard *in a company* where one was called "Brise-sea-fers," — an-

other, "Colpo-di-Sangue," — a third, "Teufel's Blut," and so on.

It was to no purpose that I appeared in all the vigour of health and strength. I might outrun the wildest bull of the buffalo herd; I might spring upon the half-trained "mustang," and outstrip the antelope in her flight; I might climb the wall-like surface of a cliff, and rob the eagle of her young; but when I came back, the cry of welcome that met me was, "Bravo, Lépero!" And thus did I bear about with me the horrid badge of that dreary time when I dwelt within the Lazaretto of Bexar.

The very fact that the name was not used in terms of scoff or reproach increased the measure of its injury. It called for no reply on my part; it summoned no energy of resistance; it was, as it were, a simple recognition of certain qualities that distinguished me and made up my identity, and at last, to such an extent did it work upon my imagination, that I yielded myself up to the delusion that I was all that they styled me — an outcast and a leper! When this conviction settled down on my mind, I ceased to fret as before, but a gloomy depression gained possession of me, uncheered save by the one hope, that my life should not be entirely spent among my present associates, and that I should yet be known as something else than "The Lépero."

The prairie over which we travelled never varied in aspect, save with the changing hours of the day. The same dreary swell — the same yellowish grass — the same scathed and scorched cedars — the same hazy outlines of distant mountains that we saw yesterday, rose before us again to-day, as we knew they would on the morrow — till at last our minds took the reflection of the scene, and we journeyed along, weary, silent, and foot-sore. It was curious enough to mark how this depression exhibited itself upon different nationalities. The Saxon became silent and thoughtful, with only a slight dash of more than ordinary care upon his features — the Italian grew peevish and irritable, the Spaniard was careless and neglectful, while the Frenchman became downright vi-

cious in the wayward excesses of his spiteful humour. Upon the half-breeds, two of whom were our guides, no change was ever perceptible. Too long accustomed to the life of the prairie to feel its influence as peculiar, they plodded on, the whole faculties bent upon one fact, the discovery of the Chihuahua trail, from which our new track was to diverge in a direction nearly due west.

Our march, no longer enlivened by merry stories or exciting narratives had become wearisome in the extreme. The heavy fogs of the night and the great mist which arose at sunset prevented all possibility of tracing the path, which often required the greatest skill to detect, so that we were obliged to travel during the sultriest hours of the day, without a particle of shade, our feet scorched by the hot sands, and our heads constantly exposed to the risk of sunstroke. Water, too, became each day more difficult to obtain; the signs by which our guides discovered its vicinity seemed, to me at least, little short of miraculous; and yet if by any chance they made a mistake, the anger of the party rose so near to mutiny, that nothing short of Halkett's own authority could restore order. Save in these altercations, without which rarely a day passed over, little was spoken; each trudged along either lost in vacuity or buried in his own thoughts.

CHAPTER III.

"The Placer."

As for myself, my dreamy temperament aided me greatly. I could build castles for ever; and certainly there was no lack of ground here for the foundation. Sometimes I fancied myself suddenly become the possessor of immense riches, with which I should found a new colony in the very remotest regions of the west. I pictured to myself the village of my workmen, surrounded with its patches of cultivation in the midst of universal barrenness — the smiling aspect of civilized life in the very centre of barbarism — the smelting furnaces, the mills, the great refining factories, of which I had heard so much, all rose to my imagination, and my own princely abode, looking down upon these evidences of my wealth.

Then, I fancied the influences of education diffusing themselves among the young, who grew up with tastes and habits so different from those of their fathers. How pursuits of refinement by degrees mingled themselves with daily requirements, till at last the silent forests would echo with the exciting strains of music, or the murmuring rivulet at nightfall would be accompanied by the recited verses of poetry.

The primitive simplicity of such a life as I then pictured was a perfect fascination: and when wearied with thinking of it by day, as I dropped asleep at night, the thoughts would haunt my dreams unceasingly.

This castle-building temperament — which is, after all, nothing but hope engaged practically — may, when pushed too far, make a man dreamy, speculative, and visionary; but if restrained within any reasonable limits, cannot fail to support the courage in many an hour of trial, and nerve the heart against many a sore infliction. I know how it kept me *up when others* of very different thews and sinews were falling *around me.* Independently of this advantage, another

a greater one accompanied it. These self-created visions, however they may represent a man in a situation of greatness or power, always do so to exhibit him dispensing — what he imagines at least to be — the virtues of such a station! No one I trust ever fancied himself a monarch for the sake of all the cruelties he might inflict, and all the tyrannies he might practise; so that, in reality, this "sparring against Fortune with the gloves on" is admirable practice — if it be nothing else.

It was on the seventeenth day of our wanderings that the guide announced we had struck into the Chihuahua "trail," and although to our eyes nothing unusual or strange presented itself, Hermose exhibited signs of unmistakeable pride and self-esteem. As I looked around me on the unvarying aspect of earth and sky, I could not help remembering my disappointment on a former occasion, when I heard of the "Banks of Newfoundland," and fancied that the Chihuahua trail might have some such unseen existence as the redoubtable "Banks" aforesaid, which however familiar to codfish are seldom visited by Christians.

"The evening star will rise straight above our heads to-night," said Hermose — and he was correct; our path lay exactly in the very line with that bright orb. The confidence inspired by this prediction increased, as we found that an occasional prickly pear-tree now presented itself, with, here and there, a dwarf box or an acacia. As night closed in, we found ourselves on the skirt of what seemed a dense wood, bordered by the course of a dried-up torrent. A great wide "streak" of rocks and stones attested the force and extent of that river when filled by the mountain streams, but which now trickled along among the pebbles with scarcely strength enough to force its way. Hermose proceeded for some distance down into the bed of the torrent, and returned with a handful of sand and clay, which he presented to Halkett, saying, "The rains have not been heavy enough; this is *last year's earth.*"

Few as were the words, they conveyed to me an immens impression of his skill, who, in a few grains of sand taken a random, could distinguish the deposits of one year from thos of another.

"How does it look, Halkett?" cried one.

"Is it heavy?" asked another.

"It is worthless," said Halkett, throwing the earth fron him; "but we are on the right track, lads, for all that: there' always gold where the green snake frequents."

It was a mystery at the time to me, how Halkett knev of the serpent's vicinity, for although I looked eagerly aroun me, I saw no trace of one.

"I vow he's a-sarchin' for the Coppernose," said a Yankee as he laughed heartily at my ignorance.

"Do you see that bird, there, upon the bough of th cedar-tree?" said Halkett; "that's the 'Choyero;' an wherever he's found, the Coppernose is never far off." Th mystery was soon explained in this wise — the "Choyero" i in the habit of enveloping himself in the leaves of a certai prickly cactus, called "Choya," with which armour he attack the largest of these green serpents, and always successfull — the strong, thorny spines of the plant invariably inflictin death-wounds upon the snake. Some asserted that the bir only attacked the snake during his season of torpor, bu others stoutly averred that the Choyero was a match for an Coppernose, in his perfect vigour.

The approach to the long-sought-for "Placer" was ce lebrated by an extra allowance of rum; and the party cor versed till a late hour of the night, with a degree of animatio they had not exhibited for a long time previous; stories of th "washings" resumed their sway — strange wild narratives - the chief interest in which, however striking at the time, la in the manner of those who related them, and were themselv the actors. They nearly all turned upon some incident gambling, and were strong illustrations of how completel *the love of gain* can co-exist with a temperament *wasteful* and reckless, while both can render a man to

indifferent to every feeling of friendship. There was mention, by chance, of a certain Narvasque, who had been the comrade of many of the party.

"He is dead," cried one.

"Caramba!" cried another, "that is scarcely true; they told me he was at the Austin fair this fall."

"You may rely on it he's dead," said the first, "for I know it: he died on the Sacramento, and in this wise. We had had a two months' run of luck at the Crestones of Bacuachez — such fortune as I only hope we may soon see again: none of your filthy wash and sieve work, nor any splintering of a steel barreta on a flint rock, but light digging along the stream, and turning up such masses of the real shining metal as would make your heart leap to look at — lumps of thirty — thirty-five — ay, forty pounds."

"There — there, Harispe!" said an old fellow, with a long pipe of sugar cane, "if we are to swallow what's a comin', don't choke us just now."

"What does an old trapper know of the diggins," said Harispe, contemptuously, "'tis a bee huntin' and a bird's nestin' you ought to be. Smash my ribs! if he ever saw goold, except on the breast of a gooldfinch." Having silenced his adversary, he resumed:

"We were all rich by the time we reached Aranchez; but what use is metal! one can't eat it, nor drink it, nor even sleep on't, and the fellows up there had got as much as we had ourselves. Everything cost twenty — no, but two hundred and twenty times its value! I used to cut a goold button off my coat every morning for a day's grub, so that we had to make ourselves a kind of log-hut outside the village, and try to vittal ourselves as best we could. There warn't much savin' in that plan neither, for we drank brandy all day long, and it cost half an ounce of goold every bottle of it! Then we stayed up all night and played brag, and it was that finished Narvasque. He was a betting with Shem Avery, and Shem, who *felt he was in for a run* of luck, layed it on a bit heavy like; *and the end o' it was*, he won all Narvasque's two months'

diggin's, all to a twenty-eight 'ouncer' that he wouldn't *bet* for anybody — no, nor let any one see where he hid it. Shem had his heart on that lump, and said, 'I'll go fifty ounces against your lump, Narvasque;' and the other didn't take it at first, but up he gets and leaves the hut. 'Honour bright,' said he, 'no man follows me.' They all gave their words, and he went out a short distance into the wood, where he had a sheep's heart hanging near a rock, in the centre of which he had concealed his treasure. He wasn't three yards from the spot, when a great spotted snake darts through the long grass, and making a spring at the piece of meat, bolts it and away! Narvasque followed into the deep jungle, unarmed as he was; there a deadly combat must have ensued, for when his cries aroused us, as we sat within the hut, we found him bitten on every part of the body, and so near death, that he had only time to tell how it happened, when he expired."

"And the snake?" cried several in a breath.

"He got clear away; we gave chase for four days after him, in vain; but a fellow with as much spare cash about him must have come to bad ere now."

"The Injians has ripped him open afore this, depend on't," said another. "There's scarce a snake of any size hasn't an emerald or splice of gold in him."

"There's more gold lies hidden by fellows that have never lived, or come back to claim it, than ye know of," said the old trapper; "and that's the kind of 'Placer' *I'd* like to chance upon, all ready washed and smelted."

"They talk of martyrs!" said a tall, sallow Spaniard, who had been educated for a priest, "let me tell you that those Injians, ay, even the Negroes, have endured as much torture for their gold, as ever did zealot for his faith. There was a fellow in my father's time, up at Guajuaqualla, who, it was said, had concealed immense treasures, not only of gold, but gems, emeralds, diamonds, and rubies: well, he not only refused all offers from the Gobernador of the mines to *share the booty*, but he suffered his toes to be taken off by the *smelting nippers*, rather than make a confession. The

they tried him with what the miners call a 'nest-egg,' that is, a piece of gold heated almost red, and inserted into the spine of the back; but it was all to no use, he never spoke a word."

"I heard of him; that was a nigger called Crick," cried another.

As for me, I heard no more. The sound of that name which brought up the memory of my night at Anticosti and all its terrors filled my heart, besides, with a strange swelling of hope, vague and ill defined it is true, but which somehow opened a vision of future wealth and greatness before me. The name, coupled with the place, Guajuaqualla, left no doubt upon my mind that they were talking of no other than the Black Boatswain himself. If I burned to ask a hundred questions about him, a prudent forbearance held me back. I knew that of all men living, none are so much given to suspicion and mistrust as the Gambusinos. The frauds and deceits eternally in practice among them, the constant concealments of treasure, the affected desertion of rich "Placers," in order to return to them later and alone, — these and many like artifices suggest a universal want of confidence, which is ever at work to trace motives or attribute intentions for every chance word or accidental expression. I restrained my curiosity, therefore; but from that hour forward, the negro and his hidden gold were ever before me. It mattered not where I was, in what companionship, or how engaged. One figure occupied the foreground of every picture. If my waking thoughts represented him exactly as I saw him at Anticosti, my sleeping fancies filled up a whole history of his life. I pictured him a slave in the "Barracoons" of his native land heavily ironed and chained. I saw him on board the slaver with bent-down head and crippled limbs, crouching [illegible] were the decks. I followed him to the slave-market, from the stream, plantation. I witnessed his sufferings, [illegible] themselves in attivengeance. I tracked him as he fled [illegible]

[illegible] *deep-mouthed bloodhounds* behind [illegible]e locality upon which we *while they struggled* in deadly [illegible]t was an unexplored branch

and mangled, the slave laid them dead at his feet, and tottered onward to stanch his wounds with the red gum of the liana. Then came an indistinct interval; and when I saw him next it was as a gold-washer in the dark stream of the "Rio Nero," his distorted limbs and mangled flesh showing through what sufferings he had passed.

Broken incoherent incidents of crime and misery, of tortured agonies and hellish vengeance, would cross my sleeping imagination, amidst which one picture ever recurred,— it was of the negro as I saw him at Anticosti, crouching beast-like on the earth, and while he patted the ground with his hand, throwing a stealthy terrified glance on every side to see that he was not observed. That he fancied himself in the act of concealing the gold for which he had bartered his very blood, the gesture indicated plainly enough; and in the same attitude my fancy would depict him so powerfully, so truthfully, too, that when I awoke, I had but to close my eyes again, and the vision would come back with every colour and adjunct of reality.

My preoccupation of mind could not have escaped the shrewd observation of my companions, had not the unexpected discovery of gold in the sands of the river effectually turned every thought into another and more interesting channel. At first it was mere dust was detected, but, later on, small misshapen pieces of dusky yellow were picked up, which showed the gold in its most valuable form, in combination with quartz rock.

Up to the moment of that discovery all was lassitude and indifference. A few only gave themselves the trouble to wet their feet; the greater number sitting lazily down upon the was t's bank, and gazing on the "washers" with a contemptuous was said, had con failures they experienced, even their humble but gems, emeralds, ith sneers and laughter; till at last Heronly refused all offers fr spicula of gold about the thickness share the booty, but he sul d the brilliant lustre caught their smelting nippers, rather t e sight of the stag, they sprung to stream.

What a sudden change came over the scene! Instead of the silence of that dark river, through whose dull current three or four figures waded noiselessly, while in lazy indolence their companions lay smoking or sleeping near, now, in an instant, the whole picture became animated. With plashing water and wild shouts of various import the deep glen resounded, as upwards of thirty men descended into the river; and while some examined the bed of the stream with the "barretas," others dived beneath the water to explore it with their hands, and bring up mingled masses of earth and dust, over which they bent with earnest gaze for many minutes together.

Then what cries of joy or disappointment broke forth at every instant. There seemed at once to come over that hardened, timeworn group of men, all the changing fickleness of childhood. The wayward vacillations of hope and despair, — bright visions of sudden wealth, with gloomy thoughts of disappointment, when, suddenly, one brought up from the bed of the stream something which he showed to his neighbour, then to another, till a knot had gathered close around him, among which I found myself. "What is it?" said I, disappointed at not seeing some great mass of yellow gold.

"Don't you see! It is the fossil bone of the antelope," said Hermose; "and when the floods have penetrated deep enough to unbury that, there's little doubt but we shall find gold enough."

"Who says enough?" cried a Mexican, as emerging half-suffocated from the water he held aloft a pure piece of metal, nearly the size of a small apple; "of such fruit as this one never can eat to indigestion!"

Halkett's whistle was soon heard, summoning the whole party to a council on the bank; nor was the call long unanswered. In an instant the tanned and swarthy figures were seen emerging, all dripping as they were, from the stream, ascending the banks, and then throwing themselves in attitudes of careless ease around the leader.

A short discussion ensued as to the locality upon which we had chanced, some averring that it was an unexplored branch

of the "Brazo," others that it was one of those wayward courses into which mountain streams are directed in seasons of unusual rain. The controversy was a warm, and might soon have become an angry one, had not Halkett put an end to all altercation by saying, "It matters little how the place be called, or what its latitude; you know the Mexican adage, 'It's always a native land where there's gold.' That there is *some* here, I have no doubt; that there is *as much* as will repay us for the halt, is another question. My advice is that we turn the river into another course, leave the present channel dry and open, and then explore it thoroughly."

"Well spoken, and true," said an old white-headed Gambusino; "that is the plan in the far west, and they are the only fellows who go right about their work."

The proposal was canvassed ably on all sides, and adopted with scarcely anything like opposition; and then parties were "told off," to carry into execution different portions of the labour. The section into which I fell was that of the scouts or explorers, who were to track the course of the stream upwards, and search for a suitable spot at which to commence operations. Hermose took the command of this party, and named the "Lépero" as his lieutenant.

The "sierra" through which our path lay was singularly wild and picturesque. The rocks, thrown about in every fantastic shape, were actually covered with the tendrils of the liana, whose great blue flowers hung in luxuriant clusters from every cliff and crag. Wild fig and almond trees loaded with fruit, red guavas and limes, met us as we advanced, till at length we found ourselves in the very centre of a tract rich in every production of our gardens, and all growing in spontaneous freedom and wildness. The yellow-flowering cactus, and the golden lobelia, that would have been the choicest treasures of a conservatory in other lands, we here broke branches off to fan away the mosquitoes and the gallinippers. The farther we went, the more fruitful and luxuriant did the tract seem. Oranges, peaches, and grapes, in all the profusion of their wildest abundance, surrounded us, and even littered

the very way beneath our feet. To feel the full enchantment of such a scene, one should have been a prairie traveller for weeks, long-wearied and heart-sore with the dull monotony of a tiresome journey, with fevered tongue and scorching feet, with eyeballs red from the glaring sun, and temples throbbing from the unshaded lustre. Then, indeed, the change was like one of those wondrous transformations of a fairy tale, rather than mere actual life. In the transports of our delight we threw ourselves down among the flowering shrubs, and covered ourselves with blossoms and buds; we bound the grape clusters on our foreheads like bacchanals, and tied great branches of the orange-tree round us as scarfs. In all the wantonness of children, we tore the fruit in handfulls, and threw it around us. The wasteful prodigality of nature seemed to suggest excess on our part, prompting us to a hundred follies and extravagances. As if to fill up the measure of our present joy by imparting the brightness of future hope, Hermose told us that such little spots of luxuriant verdure were very often found in the regions richest with gold, and that we might be almost certain of discovering a valuable Placer in our immediate vicinity. There was another, and that no inconsiderable, advantage attending these "Oases" of fertility. The Indians never dared to intrude upon these precincts; their superstition being that the "Treasure God," or the "Genius of the Mine" always had his home in these places, and executed summary vengeance upon all who dared to invade them. This piece of red man faith, however jocularly recorded, dit not meet that full contempt from my comrades I could have expected. On the contrary, many cited instances of disasters and calamities which seemed like curious corroborations of the creed. Indeed, I soon saw how naturally superstitious credences become matter of faith to him who lives the wild life of the prairies.

"Then you think we shall have to pay the price of all this enjoyment, Hermose?" said I, as I lay luxuriously beneath a spreading banana.

"*Quien sabe!* who knows?" exclaimed he, in his Mexican *dialect, and with a shrug of the shoulders that implied doubt.*

Although each event is well marked in my memory, and the incidents of each day indelibly fixed upon my mind, it is needless that I should dwell upon passages, which, however at the time full of adventure and excitement, gave no particular direction to the course of my humble destiny. We succeeded in finding a spot by which the bed of the river might be changed; and after some days of hard labour we accomplished the task.

The course of the stream thus left dry for a considerable distance, became the scene of our more active exertions. The first week or two little was discovered, save gold dust, or an occasional "spicula" of the metal, heavily alloyed with copper; but as we followed up the course, towards the mountain, a vein of richest ore was found, lying near the surface too, and presenting masses of pure gold, many of them exceeding twenty ounces in weight.

There could be no doubt that we had chanced upon a most valuable Placer; and now orders were given to erect huts, and such rude furnaces for testing, as our skill stood in need of. A strict scale of profits was also established, and a solemn oath exacted from each, to be true and faithful to his comrades in all things. Our little colony demanded various kinds of service; for, while the gold seeking was our grand object, it was necessary, in order to subsist the party, that a corps of trappers and hunters should be formed, who should follow the buffalo, the red deer, and the wild hog, over the prairies.

Many declined serving on this expedition, doubtless suspecting that the share of treasure which might be allotted to the absent man, would undergo a heavy poundage. Hermose, however, whose adventurous spirit inclined more willingly to the excitement of the chase than the monotonous labour of a washer, volunteered to go, and I offered myself to be his companion. Some half-dozen of the youngest agreed to follow us, and we were at once named — The Hunters to the Expedition.

The rivalry between the two careers, good natured as it *was, served to* amuse and interest us; and while our blank *days were certain* to obtain for us a share of scoffs and jibes,

their unsuccessful ones did not escape their share of sarcasm. If one party affected to bewail the necessity of storing up treasure for a set of walking gentlemen, who passed the day in pleasure-rambles about the country, the other took care to express their discontent at returning loaded with spoils for a parcel of lazy impostors, that lounged away their time on the bank of a river. Meanwhile both pursuits flourished admirably. Practice had made us most expert with the rifle; and as we were fortunate enough to secure some of the "mustangs," and train them to the saddle, our "chasse" became both more profitable and pleasant. By degrees, too, little evidences of superfluity began to display themselves in our equipment: our saddles, at first made of a mere wooden trestle, with a strip of buffalo hide thrown across it, were now ornamented with black bear-skins, or the more valuable black fox-skin: our own costume, if not exactly conformable to Parisian models, was comfortable and easy — a brown deer-skin tunic, fastened by a belt around the waist; short breeches, reaching to the knee-cap, which was left bare, for climbing; "botas vaqueras," very loose at top, and serving as holsters for our pistols; and a cap of fox or squirrel, usually designed by the wearer, and exhibiting proofs of ingenuity, if not taste: such was our dress.

Our weapons of rifle, and bowie-knife, and pistols, giving it a character, which, on the boards of a minor theatre, would have been a crowning "success." We were also all mounted; some, Hermose and myself in particular, admirably so. And although I often in my own heart regretted the powers of strength and endurance of poor "Charry," my little mustang steed, with his long forelock and his bushy moustaches, a strange peculiarity of this breed, was a picture of compactness and agility.

We had also constructed a rude wagon, so rude that I can even yet laugh as I think on it, to carry our spoils, which were far too cumbrous for a mere horse-load, and when left on the *prairies attracted* such numbers of prairie wolves and vultures *as to be downright* perilous. If this same wagon was not ex-

actly a type for "Long Acre," it was at least strong and serviceable; and although the wheels were far nearer oval than circular, they *did* go round; the noise they created in so doing might have been disagreeable to a nervous invalid, being something between the scream of a railway train and the yell of a thousand peacocks. But I believe we rather liked it; at least I know that when some luckless Sybarite suggested the use of a little bear's fat around the axle, he was looked on as a kind of barbarian to whom nature denied the least ear for music.

As for the "chasse" itself, it was glorious sport. Glorious in the unbounded freedom to wander whither one listed! — Glorious in the sense of mastery we felt, that we alone of all the millions of mankind had reached this far-away, unvisited tract! — Glorious in its successes, its dangers, and its toils! There was, besides, that endless variety of adventure prairie-hunting affords. Now, it was the heavy buffalo, lumbering lazily along, and tossing his huge head in anger, as the rifle ball pierced his dense hide! Now, it was the proudly antlered stag, careering free over miles and miles of waste. At another time the grizzly bear was our prey, and our sport lay in the dense jungle, or among the dwarf scrub, through which the hissing rattle-snake was darting, affrighted at the noise. In more peaceful mood the antelope would be the victim; while the wild turkey, or the great cock of the wood, would grace with his bright wavy feathers the cap of him whose aim was true at longest rifle range.

And these were happy days, — the very happiest of my whole life! for if, sometimes, regrets would arise about that road of ambition from which I had turned off, to wander in the path of mere pleasure, I bethought me that no career the luckiest fortune could have opened to me would have developed the same manly powers of endurance of heat and cold, and of peril in a hundred shapes. In no other pursuit could I have educated myself to the like life of toils and dangers, bringing me daily, as it were, face to face with death, till I could look on him without a shudder or a fear.

I will not say that Donna Maria may not have passed across the picture of my mind-drawn regrets; but if her form did indeed flit past, it was to breathe a hope of some future meeting, some bright time to come, the recompense of all our separation. And I thought with pride how much more worthy of her would I be as the prairie-hunter — the fearless follower of the bear and buffalo, — accustomed to the life of the wild woods, — than as the mere adventurer, whose sole stock in trade was the subterfuge and deceit he could practise on the unwary.

It was strange enough all this while that I seemed to have lost sight of my old guide-star, — the great passion of my earlier years, the desire to be a "Gentleman." It was stranger still, but, after-reflection has shown me that it was true, I made far greater progress toward that wished-for goal, when I ceased to make it the object of my ambition.

CHAPTER IV.

The Fate of a Gambusino.

The "life of the prairie," with all its seeming monotony, was very far from wearisome. The chase, which to some might have presented the same unvarying aspect, to those who passionately loved sport, abounded in new and exciting incidents. If upon one day the object of pursuit was the powerful bison bull, with his shaggy mane and short straight horns, on another, it was the swift antelope or the prairie fox, whose sable skin is the rarest piece of dandyism a hunter's pelisse can exhibit: now and then the wide-spread paw of a brown bear would mark the earth, and give us days of exciting pursuit: or again, some Indian "trail" — some red man "sign" — would warn us that we were approaching the hunting-grounds of a tribe, and that all our circumspection was needed. Beside these, there were changes, inappreciable to the uninitiated, but thoroughly understood by us, in the land-

scape itself, highly interesting. It is a well-known fact that the shepherd becomes conversant with the face of every sheep in his flock, tracing differences of expression, where others would recognise nothing but a blank uniformity; so did the prairie, which at first presented one unvarying expanse, become at last marked by a hundred peculiarities, with which close observation made us intimate. Indeed I often wondered how a great stretching plain, without a house, a tree, a shrub or a trickling brook, could supply the materials of scenic interest, and the explanation is almost as difficult as the fact. One must have lived the life of solitude and isolation which these wild wastes compel, to feel how every moss-clad stone can have its meaning — how the presence of some little insignificant lichen indicates the vicinity of water — how the blue foxbell shows where honey is to be found — how the fainspiral motion of the pirn grass gives warning that rain is nigh at hand. Then with what interest at each sunset is the horizon invested, when the eye can pierce space to a vast extent, and mark the fog-banks which tower afar off, and distinguish the gathering clouds from the dark-backed herd of buffaloes, or a group of Indians on a march. Every prairie "roll," every dip and undulation of that vast surface, had its own interest till at length I learned to think that all other prospects must be tame, spiritless, and unexciting, in comparison with that glorious expanse, where sky and earth were one and where the clouds alone threw shadows upon the vast plain.

The habit of a hunter's life in such scenes, the constant watchfulness against sudden peril, inspire a frame of mind in which deep reflectiveness is blended with a readiness and promptitude of action, gifts which circumstances far more favourable to moral training do not always supply. The long day passed in total solitude, since very often the party separates to rendezvous at nightfall, necessarily calls for thought; not indeed the dreamy reverie of the visionary forgetful of himself and all the world, but of that active, stirring mental operation, which demands effort and will. If fancifu

pictures of the future as we would wish to make it, intervene, they come without displacing the stern realities of the present, any more than the far distances of a picture interfere with the figures of the foreground.

Forgive, most kind reader, the prolix fondness with which I linger on this theme. Fortune gave me but scant opportunity of cultivation, but my best schooling was obtained upon the prairies. It was there I learned the virtue of self-reliance, the only real independence. It was there I taught myself to endure reverses without disappointment, and bear hardships without repining. It was there I came to know that he who would win an upward way in life must not build upon some self-imagined superiority, but boldly enter the lists with others, and make competitorship the test of his capacity. They were inferior acquirements, it is true; but I learned also to bear hunger and cold, and want of rest and sleep, which in my after-life were not without their value. It would savour too much of a "bull" for him who writes his own memoirs to apologize for egotism, still I do feel compunctions of conscience about the length of these personal details — and now to my story.

While we pursued our hunting pastime over the prairies, the "expedition" was successful beyond all expectation. No sooner was the bed of the river laid bare, than gold was discovered in quantities, and the "washers" despising the slower process of "sifting," betook themselves to the pick and the "barreta," like their comrades. It was a season of rejoicing, and, so far as our humble means permitted, of festivity; for though abounding in gold, our daily food was buffalo and "tough doe," unseasoned by bread, or anything that could prove its substitute. If the days were passed in successful labour, the evenings were prolonged with narratives of the late discoveries, and gorgeous imaginings of the future, as each fancied the bright vista should be. Some, were for a life of unbounded excess and dissipation — the "amende," as they deemed it, for all their toil and endurance; others, anticipated a career of *splendour* and display in the Old World. The

Frenchman raved of Paris and its cafés and restaurants, its theatres and its thousand pleasures. A few speculated upon setting forth on fresh expeditions with better means of success. Halkett alone bethought him of home and of an aged mother, in the far-away valley of Llanberris, whose remainder of life he longed to render easy and independent.

Nor was it the least courageous act of his daring life, to avow such a feeling among such associates. How they laughed at his humility! how they scoffed at the filial reverence of the Gambusino! Few of them had known a parent's care. Most were outcasts from their birth, and started in life with that selfish indifference to all others which is so often the passport to success. I saw this, and perceived how affection and sympathy are so much additional weight upon the back of him "who enters for the plate of Fortune;" but yet my esteem for Halkett increased from that moment. I fancied that his capacity for labour and exertion was greater, from the force of a higher and a nobler impulse than that which animated the others; and I thought I could trace to this source the untiring energy for which he was conspicuous above all the rest. It was evident, too, that this "weakness," as they deemed it, had sapped nothing of his courage, nor detracted in aught from his resolute daring — ever foremost, as he was, wherever peril was to be confronted.

I ruminated long and frequently over this, to me, singular trait of character. Whole days as I rambled the prairies alone in search of game; the tedious hours of the night I would lie awake, speculating upon it, and wondering if it were impulses of this nature that elevated men to high deeds and generous actions; and — to realize my conception in one word — made them "Gentlemen."

To be sure, in all the accessory advantages of such, Halkett was most lamentably deficient, and it would have been labour in vain to endeavour to conform him to any one of the usages *of the polite world*; and yet, I thought, might it not be possible *that this rude* unlettered man might have within him, in

the recesses of his own heart, all those finer instincts, all those refinements of high feeling and honour that make up a gentleman, — like a lump of pure virgin gold encased in a mass of pudding-stone. The study of this problem took an intense hold upon me; for while I could recognise in myself a considerable power of imitating all the observances of the well-bred world, I grieved to see that these graces were mere garments, which no more influenced a man's real actions than the colour of his coat or the shape of his hat will affect the stages of an ague or the paroxysms of a fever.

To become a "gentleman," according to my very crude notions of that character, was the ruling principle of my life. I knew that rank, wealth, and station, were all indispensably requisite; but these I also fancied might be easily counterfeited, while other gifts must be absolutely possessed; — such as a good address; a skill in all manly exercises; a personal courage ever ready to the proof; a steady adherence to a pledged word. Now I tried to educate myself to all these, and to a certain extent, I succeeded. In fact, I experienced what all men have who have set up a standard before them, that constant measurement will make one grow taller. I fancied that Halkett and myself were on the way to the same object, by different roads. Forgive the absurd presumption, most benevolent reader; for there is really something insufferably ludicrous in the very thought; and I make the "confession" now only in the fulness of a heart which is determined to have no concealments.

That I rode my "mustang" with a greater air — that I wore my black fox pelisse more jauntily — that I slung my rifle at my back with a certain affectation of grace — that I was altogether "got up" with an eye to the picturesque, did not escape my companions, who made themselves vastly merry at pretensions which, in their eyes, were so supremely ridiculous; but which amply repaid me for all the sarcasm, by suggesting a change of their name for me, — my old appellation, "Il Lépero," being abandoned for "Il Condé," — the Count. It matters little in what spirit you give a man a pecu-

liar designation: the world take it up in their own fashion, and he himself conforms to it, whether for good or evil.

As the "Condé," I doubtless displayed many a laughable affectation, and did many things in open caricature of the title; but, on the other hand, the name spurred me on to actions of most perilous daring, and made me confront danger for the very sake of the hazard; till, by degrees, I saw that the designation conferred upon me — at first in mockery — became a mark of honourable esteem among my comrades.

The Prairie was fruitful in incidents to test my courage. As the season wore on, and game became more scarce, we were compelled to pursue the "bison" into distant tracks, verging upon the hunting-grounds of an Indian tribe, called the Camanches. At first our "rencontres" were confined to meeting with a scout, or some small outlying party of the tribe; but later on, we ventured further within their frontier, and upon one occasion we penetrated a long and winding ravine, which expanded into a small plain, in the midst of which, to our amazement, we beheld their village.

The scene was in every way a striking one. It was a few minutes after sunset, and while yet the "yellow glory" of the hour bathed the earth, that we saw the cane wigwams of the "Camanches," as they stood at either side of a little river that, with many a curve, meandered through the plain. Some squaws were seated on the banks, and a number of children were sporting in the stream, which appeared too shallow for swimming. Here and there, at the door of the wigwams, an old man was sitting smoking. Some mustangs, seemingly fresh caught, were picketed in a circle, and a few boys were amusing themselves, tormenting the animals into bounds and curvets — the laughter the sport excited being audible where we stood. The soft influence of the hour — the placid beauty of the picture — the semblance of tranquil security impressed on everything — the very childish gambols — were all images so full of home and homelike memories, that we halted and gazed on the scene in speechless emotion. Perhaps each of us at that moment had traversed in imagination half a world of

space, and was once again a child! As for myself, infancy had been "no fairy dream," and yet my eyes filled up, and yet my lip quivered as I looked.

It was evident that the warriors of the tribe were absent on some expedition. The few figures that moved about were either the very old, the very young, or the squaws, who, in all the enjoyment of that gossiping, as fashionable in the wild regions of the West as in the gilded boudoirs of Paris, sat enjoying the cool luxury of the twilight.

Our party consisted of only four and myself; and standing, as we did, in a grove of nut-trees, were perfectly concealed from view; no sense of danger then interfered with our enjoyment of the prospect; we gazed calmly on the scene on which we looked.

"Señhor Condé," whispered one of my party, a swarthy Spaniard from the Basque, "what a foray we might make yonder; their young men are absent; they could make no defence. Caramba! it would be rare sport."

"Condé mio!" cried a Mexican, who had once been a horse-dealer, "I see mustangs yonder worth five hundred dollars, if they are worth a cent; let us have a dash forward, and carry them off."

"There is gold in that village," muttered an old Ranchero, with a white moustache; "I see sifting-sieves drying beside the stream."

And so, thought I to myself, these are the associates, who, a moment back, I dreamed were sharing my thoughts, and whose hearts, I fancied, were overflowing with softest emotions. One, indeed, had not pronounced, and to him I turned in hope. He was a dark-eyed, sharp-featured Breton. "And you, Claude," said I, "what are your thoughts on this matter?"

"I leave all in the hands of my captain," said he, saluting in military fashion; "but if there be a pillage, I claim the woman that is sitting on the rock yonder, with a yellow girdle round her, as mine."

I turned away in utter disappointment. The robber-spirit was the only one I had evoked, and I grew sick at heart to think of it. How is it, that, in certain moods of mind, the vices we are conversant with assume a double coarseness, and that we feel repugnance to what daily habit had seemed to have inured us?

"Is it to be, or not?" growled the Spaniard, who, having tightened his girths, and examined the lock of his rifle, now stood in somewhat impatient anxiety.

"Since when have we become banditti," said I, insultingly "that we are to attack and pillage helpless women and children? Are these the lessons Halkett has taught us? Back to the camp. Let us have no more of such counsels."

"We meet nothing but scoffs and jibes when we return empty-handed," muttered the Spaniard. "It is seldom such an opportunity offers of a heavy booty."

"Right-about," said I, imperiously, not caring to risk my ascendency by debating the question further. They obeyed without a word; but it was easy to see that the spirit of mutiny was but sleeping. For some miles of the way a dreary silence pervaded the party. I tried all in my power to bring back our old good understanding, and erase the memory of the late altercation; but even my friend Narvasque held aloof, and seemed to side with the others. I was vexed and irritated to a degree the amount of the incident was far from warranting; nor was the fact that we were returning without any success without its influence. Moody and sad, I rode alone at their head, not making any further effort to renew their confidence, when suddenly a spotted buck started from the shelter of a Prairie roll, and took his way across the plain. To unsling my rifle and fire at him was the work of half a minute. My shot missed; and I heard, or thought I heard, a burst of contemptuous laughter behind me. Without turning my head, I spurred my horse to a sharp gallop, and proceeded to reload my rifle as I went. The buck had, however, got a "long start" of me; and although my mustang had both speed and endurance, I soon saw that the chase would prove unrewarding;

and, after a hot pursuit of half a mile, I pulled up and wheeled about. Where was my party? not a trace of them was to be seen. I rode up a little slope of the Prairie, and then, at a great way off, I could descry their figures, as with furious speed they were hastening back in the direction of the Camanche village. I cannot express the bitterness of the feeling that came over me.

It was no longer the sense of outraged humanity which filled my heart. Selfishness usurped the ground altogether, and it was the injured honour of a leader, whose orders had been despised. It was the affront to my authority wounded me so deeply. Then I fancied to myself their triumphant return to the camp, laden with the spoils of victory, and full of heroic stories of their own deeds; while I, the captain of the band, should have nothing to contribute but a lame narrative of misplaced compassion, which some might call by even a harsher name. Alas for weak principle! I wished myself back at their head a hundred times over. There was no atrocity that, for a minute or two, I did not feel myself capable of; I really believe that, if any other course were open to me, I had never turned my steps back toward the camp. Crest-fallen and sad indeed was I, as I rode forward — now, cursing the insubordinate rabble that deserted me — now, inveighing against my own silly efforts to change the ferocious instincts of such natures. In my bitterness of spirit I attributed all to my foolish ambition of being "the gentleman." What business had such a character there? or what possible link could bind him to such companionship? In my discontent, too, I fancied that these "gentlemen" traits were like studding-sails, only available in fine weather, and with a fair wind; but that for the storms and squalls of life, such fine-spun canvas was altogether unsuited. Is it needful I should say that I lived to discover this to be an error?

To reach the camp ere nightfall, I was obliged to ride fast, and the quick stride of my "half-breed" did more to rally my *spirits than all my philos*ophizings.

The slight breeze of sunset was blowing over the Prairie,

In I came in sight of the skirting of nut-wood which sheltered the camp to the "south'ard." It was like home, somehow, that spot. The return to it each evening, had given it that character, and one's instincts are invariably at work to make substitutes for all the "prestiges" that tell of family and friends. I experienced the feeling strongly now, as I entered the wood, and spurred my nag onward, impatient to catch a glimpse at the watch-fires. As I issued from the copse, and looked up towards the little table-land where the camp used to stand, I saw nothing that spoke of my friends. There were no fires: not a figure moved on the spot. I pressed eagerly forward to ascertain the reason; my mind full of its own explanation of the fact, in which, I own it, fears were already blending. Perhaps they had removed somewhat higher up the stream: perhaps the Camanches had been there, and a battle had been fought: perhaps —. But why continue? Already I stood upon the spreading surface of table-land, and was nearing the spot where all our huts were built, and now a deep booming noise filled my ears — a hollow, cavernous sound, like the sea surging within some rocky cave. I listened: it grew fuller and louder, or seemed to do so, and I could mark sounds that resembled the crashing of timber and the splintering of rocks.

My suspense had now risen to torture, and my poor mustang, equally frightened as myself, refused to move a step, but stood with his ears flattened back, fore legs extended, and protruded nostril, sniffing, in a very paroxysm of fright.

I dismounted, and fastening his head to his fore leg, in Mexican fashion, advanced on foot. Each step I made brought me nearer to the sounds, which now I perceived were those of a fast-rolling river. A horrid dread shot through my heart — my senses reeled as it struck me, — but with an effort, I sprang forward, and there, deep below me, in a boiling ocean of foam, rolled the river along the channel which we had succeeded in damming up, on the mountain side, and in whose dry bed all *our labours had been* followed. In an instant the whole truth *revealed itself before me*: the stream, swollen by rain falling

in the distant mountains, had overborne the barrier, and descending with all its force, had carried away village, mines, and every trace of the ill-fated "Expedition." The very trees that grew along the banks were at first undermined, and then swept away, and might be seen waving their great branches above the flood, and then disappearing for ever — like gigantic figures struggling in the agony of drowning. The rude smelting-house, built of heavy stones and masses of rock, had been carried down with the rest. Trees whose huge size attested ages of growth reeled with the shock that shook the earth beside them, and seemed to tremble at their own coming destiny.

The inundation continued to increase at each instant, and more than once the "yellowest" waves compelled me to retire. This it was which first led me to despair of my poor comrades, since I inferred that the torrent had burst its barrier only a short space before my arrival, and as the sunset was the hour when all the gold discovered during the day was collected before being deposited in the smelting-house. I [illegible]ured that my companions were overtaken at that [illegible]oment by the descending flood, and that none had escaped destruction.

However the sad event took place, I never saw any of them after, and although I tracked the stream for miles, and spent the entire of two days in search of them, I did not discover one trace of the luckless expedition. So changed had everything become — such a terrible alteration had the scene undergone — that whenever I awoke from a sleep, short and broken as my feverish thoughts would make it, it was with difficulty I could believe that this was once the "Camp:" that where that swollen and angry torrent rolled, had been the dry, gravelly bed where joyous parties laboured; that beneath those cedars, where now the young alligator stirred the muddy slime, we used to sit, and chat in pleasant companionship: that human joys, and passions, and hopes once lived and flourished in that little space where ruin and desolation had now set their marks, and where the weariest trav-

eller would not linger, so sorrow-struck and sad was every feature of the scene.

Poor Halkett was uppermost in my thoughts; his remembrance of his old mother; his plans for her future happiness and comfort, formed, doubtless many a long year before, and only realized to be dashed for ever! How many a wanderer and outcast, doubtless, like him, have sunk into unhonoured graves in far-away lands, and of whom no trace exists, and who are classed among the worthless and the heartless of their families; and yet, if we had record of them, we might learn, perhaps, how thoughts of home — of some dear mother — of some kind sister — of some brother, who had been more than father — had spirited them on to deeds of daring and privation — and how, in all the terrible conflict of danger in which their days were spent, one bright hope of returning home at last — glittered like a light ship on a lonely sea, and shed a radiance, when all around was dark and dreary.

The third day broke, and still found me lingering beside the fatal torrent, not only without meeting with any of my former comrades, but even of that party who had returned to the Indian village, not one came back. In humble imitation of Prairie habit, I erected a little cross on the spot, and with my penknife inscribed poor Halkett's name. This done, I led my horse slowly away through the tangled underwood, till I reached the open plain, then I struck out in a gallop, and rode in the direction where the sun was setting.

The mere detail of personal adventures, in which the traits of character, or the ever-varying aspects of human nature find no place, must always prove wearisome. The most "hair-breadth 'scapes" require for their interest the play of passions and emotions, and in this wise the perils of the lonely traveller amid the deserts of the Far West could not vie in interest with the slightest incident of domestic life, wherein human cares and hopes and joys are mingled up.

I will not longer trespass on the indulgence of any one who *has accompanied* me so far, by lingering over the accidents

of my Prairie life — nor tell by what chances I escaped death in some of its most appalling forms. The "Choctaw," the jaguar, the spotted leopard of the jungle, the cayman of the sand lakes, had each in turn marked me for its prey, and yet, preserved from every peril, I succeeded in reaching the little village of "La Noria," or the "Well," which occupies one of the opening gorges of the Rocky Mountains, at the outskirts of which some of the inhabitants found me asleep, with clothing reduced to very rags, nothing remaining of all my equipment save my rifle, and a little canvas pouch of ammunition.

My entertainers were miners, whose extreme poverty and privation would have been inexplicable, had I not learned that the settlement was formed exclusively of convicts, who had either been pardoned during the term of their sentence, or, having completed their time, preferred passing the remainder of their lives in exile. As a "billet of conduct" was necessary to all who settled at the village, the inhabitants, with a very few exceptions, were peaceable, quiet, and inoffensive, and of the less well disposed, a rigidly severe police took the most effective charge.

Had there been any way of disposing of me, I should not have been suffered to remain; but as there was no "parish" to which they could "send me on," nor any distinct fund upon which to charge me, I was retained in a spirit of rude compassion, for which, had it even been ruder, I had been grateful. The "Gobernador" of the settlement was an old Mexican officer of Santa Anna's staff, called Salezar, and whose "promotion" was a kind of penalty imposed upon him for his robberies and extortions in the commissariat of the army. He was not altogether unworthy of the trust, since it was asserted that there never was a convict vice nor iniquity in which he was not thoroughly versed, nor could any scheme be hatched, the clue to which his dark ingenuity could not discover.

I was summoned before him on the day of my arrival, and certainly a *greater* contrast could not have been desired than *was the bravery of his* costume to the rags of mine. A Spanish

hat and feathers, such as is only seen upon the stage, surmounted his great red and carbuncled face; a pair of fiery red moustaches, twisted into two complete circles, with a tail out of them like an eccentric "Q;" a sky-blue jacket covered with silver buttons; tight pantaloons of the same colour, and Hessian boots, made up the chief details of a figure, whose unwieldy size the tightness of the dress did not by any means set off to advantage. He wore besides a quantity of daggers, pistols, and stilettos, suspended around his person, and a huge Barcelona blade hung by two silver chains from his side, the rattle and jingle of which, as he spoke, appeared to give him the most lively pleasure. I was ordered to stand before a table at which he sat, with a kind of secretary at his side, while he interrogated me as to who I was, whence I came, the object of my journey, and so forth. My account of myself was given in the very briefest way I could devise — totally devoid of all colouring or exaggeration, and, *for me*, with a most singular avoidance of the romantic; and yet, to my utter discomfiture, from the very announcement of my name, down to the last incident of my journey, he characterized every statement by the very short and emphatic word "a lie," desiring the secretary to record the same in his "Ledger," as his own firm conviction; "and add," said he, solemnly, "that the fellow is a spy from the States of North America — that he probably belonged to some exploring party into our frontier — and that he will most certainly be hanged whenever the smallest offence is proved against him." These benign words were most royally spoken, and I made my acknowledgments for them by taking off my tattered and greasy cap, and, with a most urbane bow, wishing him health and happiness for half a century to come, to pronounce similar blessings upon many others.

The bystanders did look, I confess, somewhat terrified at my impromptu courtesy; but Salezar, upon whom my rags, and my grotesque appearance generally, produced a rather *amusing effect*, laughed heartily, and bade them give me *something* to eat. The order, simple and intelligible as it

was, at least to me, seemed to evoke the strangest signs of surprise and astonishment, and not unreasonably; for, as I afterwards came to know, no Lazurus eat of the crumbs which fell from this "rich man's table," while from the poor herd of the settlers, not a crust nor a parched pea could be expected, as they were fed by rations so scantily doled out as barely to support life. The order to feed me was therefore issued pretty much in the same spirit which made Marie Antoinette recommend the starving people to eat "brioche." As no one was to be found, however, bold enough to express a doubt as to the facility of the measure, I was led away in silence.

A very animated little discussion arose in the street as to what I was to get? where to have it? and who to give it? difficulties which none seemed able to solve by any explanation save the usual Mexican one of "quien sabe?" or "who knows?" having uttered which in accents of very convincing embarrassment, each went his way, leaving me standing with an old mule-driver, the only one who had not delivered himself of this speech.

Now it chanced that the well from which the village derived its name of "La Noria" had originally been worked by two mules, who having died off, their places were supplied by two miserable asses of the prairie breed, creatures not much bigger than sheep, and scarcely stronger. These wretched beasts had been for years past stimulated to their daily labour by the assiduous persecutions of a fierce English bull-dog, who, with bark and bite, made their lives a very pretty martyrdom. Either worn-out by his unremitting exertions, or that asses' flesh (of which, from their hocks and hind quarters generally, he freely partook) disagreed with him, the animal sickened and died, leaving the poor Mulero to his own unaided devices to drive the donkeys round the charmed circle. I believe that he did all that mere man was capable of — in fact, in everything, save using his teeth, he imitated closely the practises of the illustrious defunct. But asses though *they were, they soon* discovered that the "great motive prin-

ciple" was wanting, and betook themselves to a far easier and more congenial mode of doing the day's work.

Now the Mulero was a man of thought and reflection, and it occurred to him that if asses, however inadequately, could yet, in some sort, perform the functions of mules, there was no reason why a man, even a very poor-looking and ragged one, should not replace a bull-dog. There was that hungry, half-starved look about me, too, that vouched my temper would not be of the sweetest: and he eyed me with the glance of a connoisseur. At last Mijo — for such was he called — made the proposal to me in all form; explaining that my predecessor had had his rations allowed him like a colonist, and was entitled to sleep under cover at the house of his former mistress, La Señhora Dias, "who," he added, with a sly wink, "was my countrywoman." Well knowing that a Mexican never boggles at a lie, no matter how broad and palpable, I took no notice of what I at once concluded to be impossible; but proceeded to inquire as to the precise functions I might be expected to perform in my canine capacity.

"A mere nothing," said he, with a shrug of his shoulders: "we harness the beasts at daybreak, say three o'clock; by eight the water is all up; then you can sleep or amuse yourself till four of the afternoon, when the Commandante Salezar likes to have cool water for his bath; that only takes an hour; then you are free again till night closes in."

"And what then?" asked I, impatiently.

"You have your rounds at night."

"My rounds! where, and what for?"

"Against the prairie wolves, that now and then are daring enough to come down into the very settlement, and carry off kids and lambs; ay, and sometimes don't stop there."

He winked with a terrible significance at the last words.

"So, then, I am not only to bark at the asses all day, but I am to bay the wolves by night?" said I, half indignantly.

"*Lupo* did it," responded he, with a nod.

"*He was a dog,* Señhor Mijo," said I.

"Ah, that he was!" added he, in a tone very different from my remark, accompanying it with a most disparaging glance at my ragged habiliments. I read the whole meaning of the look at once, and hung my head, abashed at the disparaging comparison.

He waited patiently for my reply, and perceiving that I was still silent, he said, "Well, is it a bargain?"

"Agreed," said I, with a sigh; and wondering if Fortune had yet any lower depths in store for me, I followed him to his hut. Mijo proceeded to acquaint me with all the details of my office, and also certain peculiarities of the two beasts for whose especial misery I was engaged. If compassion could have entered into my nature, it might have moved me at sight of them. Their haunches and hocks were notched and scored with the marks of teeth, while their tails were a series of round balls, like certain old-fashioned bell-ropes, the result of days of suffering.

"I am so accustomed to the name, I must call you 'Lupo,'" said Mijo; "you have no objection?"

"Not in the least," said I; "if a 'dog in office,' why not a dog in name?"

That same day I was conducted to the "Tienda del Gato," the shop of "The Cat," at the sign of which animal La Señhora Dias resided. It was a small cottage at the very extremity of the village, in a somewhat pretty garden, and here a kind of canteen was held, at which the settlers procured cigars, brandy, and other like luxuries, in exchange for their "tickets of labour."

Of the Señhora, some mystery existed: the popular rumour was, that she had been the favourite mistress of Santa Anna, whose influence, however, could not rescue her from the fate of a convict, to which she was sentenced for forgery. Her great patron contrived, however, to release her from the indignity of a penal settlement, and placed her at "La Noria," where she had resided two years. Some said that it was to conceal herself from the prying curiosity of the vulgar; another, that it was to hide the brand of the letter "F," burned

with a hot iron in her forehead: others, again, that it was by Santa Anna's express order (but what the reason?) she always wore a black velvet mask, which, since her arrival at the village, none had seen her remove.

A hundred stories, one more absurd than another, were circulated about her high birth and condition, and the vast wealth she had once possessed. The only real clue I could discover to these narratives, being the simple fact that her dog, a fierce English bull-dog — my own predecessor, and who by peculiar favour was permitted to accompany her — used to wear a massive silver collar, richly chased and ornamented: fiction, indeed, had invested it with precious stones and gems, but these were purely imaginative ornaments. Even devoid of jewels, such was deemed an unequivocal proof of riches among those whose poverty was of the very lowest order, and La Señhora Dias bought her "millionaire" character at a cheap price. To me, the most interesting part in her story was that which called her my countrywoman, and yet this seemed so unlikely, and was coupled with so much that I knew to be impossible, that I did not venture to believe it.

It was the hour of the siesta when we reached "the Cat," so that I had no opportunity of seeing the Señhora. Mijo conducted me to a little building in the garden, originally built as a hut for a man who watched the fruit, but latterly inhabited by Lupo. There I was installed at once. Some chestnut-leaves were my bed, a small spring afforded me water; I was to receive eight ounces of maize bread each day, with half an ounce of coffee — Lupo had "taken" the latter "out" in sausages. Of the fruit of the garden, consisting of limes, oranges, peaches, and mangoes, I was free of whatever fell to the ground — a species of black-mail that never failed me at the dessert. These were my perquisites, my duties I already knew; and so Mijo left me, to recruit myself by one day's rest, and on "the morrow," to begin my *labours.*

I shall never forget the strange mélange of feelings, plea-

surable and the reverse, which came over me as I first found myself alone, and had time to think over my condition. Many would perhaps have said that the degradation would have mastered all other thoughts, and that the life to which I was reduced would have tended to break down all self-respect and esteem. Whether to my credit or otherwise, I know not, but I did not feel thus — nay, I even went so far as to congratulate myself that a source of livelihood was open to me, which did not involve me in forced companionship, and that I might devote so many hours of each day to my own undisturbed thoughts, as I wandered about that vast garden, in which no other than myself appeared ever to set foot.

Culture it had none, nor seemed to need it: one of my duties was, to pluck the ripe fruit every day, ere I issued forth to the "Well," and place the baskets at the Señhora's door; and save this, I believe, all was left to Nature. What a wilderness of rank luxuriance it was! The earth had become so fertilized by the fallen fruit left to rot as it fell, that the very atmosphere was loaded with the odour of peaches, and oranges, and pomegranates. A thousand gaudy and brilliant flowers too glittered among the tall grass that tried to overtop them: and insects and creatures, of colours still more beauteous, fluttered and chirped among the leaves, making a little chorus of sounds, that mingled deliciously with the rippling stream that murmured near.

CHAPTER V.

La Senhora.

To this very hour I am unable to say how long I remained at the village of La Noria. Time slipped away unchronicled; the seasons varied little, save for about two winter months, when heavy snows fell, and severe cold prevailed; but spring followed these with a suddenness that seemed like magic, and then came summer and autumn, as it were, blended into one, — all the varied beauties of the one season vying with the other. This was all that was wanting to complete the illusion which the monotony of my daily life suggested: for me there was no companionship — no link that bound me to my fellow-men; the "Sunday," too, "shone no Sabbath-day for me." The humble range of my duties never varied; nor, save with Mijo, did I ever exchange even a passing word. Indeed, the hours of *my* labour were precisely those when all others slept; and whether I tracked the wayworn asses at their dreary round, or pursued my solitary path at night, my own was the only voice I ever heard. It was the "life of a dog;" but after all, how many states of existence there are far less desirable! I had always wherewithal to subsist upon; I had no severe labour, nor any duty incompatible with health; and I had — greatest blessing of all — time for self-communing and reflection: that delicious leisure, in which the meanest hovel ever raised by hands becomes one's "Home." I was happy, then, after my own fashion: various little contrivances to lighten my tasks amused and occupied my thoughts. To bring the garden into order was also a passion with me; and, although necessitated to invent and fashion the tools to work with, I was not deterred by this difficulty, but manfully overcame it. I greatly doubt if Watt ever gazed at a new improvement in steam machinery with half the delight I

looked upon my first attempt at a rake. Then what pleasure did I experience as I saw the trim beds covered with blooming flowers, — the clearly-raked walks, — the grass-plots close shaven and weedless! How the thoughts of changes and alterations filled my mind, as I wandered in the dreary night! What trellices did I not invent! — what festoons of the winding vine-branches! — what bowers of the leafy banana! Like the old gardener, Adam, I began at last to think that all these things were too beautiful for one man's gaze; that such ecstasies as mine deserved companionship, and that the selfishness of my enjoyment was the greatest blot upon its perfection. When this notion caught hold of me, I wandered away in fancy to the "Donna Maria de los Dolores;" and how fervently did I believe that, with her to share it, my present existence had been a life of Paradise!

These thoughts at last exhausted themselves, and I fell a thinking why the Señora Dias never had the curiosity to visit her garden, nor see the changes I had wrought in it. To be sure, it was true, she knew nothing of them: how then was I to make the fact reach her ears? The only hours that *I* was at liberty were those when every close-drawn curtain and closed shutter proclaimed the "siesta."

It was clear enough that a whole life might slip over in this fashion without my ever seeing her. There was something in the difficulty that prompted a desire to overcome it; and so I set myself to plan the means by which I might make her acquaintance. Of the windows which looked towards the garden, the blinds were always closed: the single door that led into it as invariably locked; I bethought me of writing a humble and most petitionary epistle, setting forth my utter solitude and isolation; but where were pen and ink and paper to come from? — these were luxuries the Gobernador himself alone possessed. My next thought was more practicable; it was to deposit each morning upon her basket of fruit a little bouquet of fresh flowers. But, then, would they ever reach her hands? — would not the servant purloin and intercept my offering? — *ay, that was to be* thought of.

By most assiduous watching, I at last discovered that her bed-room looked into the garden by a small grated window, almost hidden by the gnarled branches of a wild fig-tree. This at once afforded me the opportunity I desired, and up the branches of this I climbed each morning of my life, to fasten to the bars my little bouquet of flowers.

With what intense expectancy did I return home the first morning of my experiment! what vacillations of hope and fear agitated me, as I came near the garden, and looking up, saw to my inexpressible delight that the bouquet was gone! I could have cried for very joy! At last I was no longer an outcast, forgotten by my fellows. One, at least, knew of my existence, and possibly pitied and compassionated my desolation.

I needed no more than this to bind me again to the love of life; frail as was the link, it was enough whereupon to hang a thousand hopes and fancies, and it suggested matter for cheering thought, where before the wide waste of existence stretched pathless and purposeless before me. How I longed for that skill by which I might make the flowers the interpreters of my thoughts! I knew nothing of this, however; I could but form them into such combinations of colour and order as should please the senses, but not appeal to the heart; and yet I did try to invent a language, forgetting the while that the key of the cipher must always remain with myself.

It chanced that one night, when on my rounds outside the village, I suddenly discovered that I had forgotten the caps for my rifle. I hastened homeward to fetch them, and entered the garden by a small door, which I had myself made, and of which few were cognisant. It was a night of bright moonlight; but the wind was high, and drifted large masses of cloud across the sky, alternately hiding and displaying the moon. Tracking, with an instinct too well trained to become deceptive, the walks of the garden, while a dark mass *shut out the* "lamp of night," I reached my hut, when sud*denly, on a little* stone-bench beside the door, I beheld a

female figure seated. She was scarcely four yards from where I stood, and in the full glare of the moonlight, as palpable as at noon-day. She was tall and elegantly formed; her air and carriage, even beneath the coarse folds of a common dress of black serge, such as bespoke condition; her hands, too, were white as marble, and finely and delicately formed; in one of them she held a velvet mask, and I watched with anxiety to see the face from which it had been removed, which was still averted from me. At last she turned slowly round, and I could perceive that her features, although worn by evident suffering and sorrow, had once been beautiful; the traits were in perfect symmetry; the mouth alone had a character of severity, somewhat at variance with the rest, but its outline was faultless — the expression only being unpleasing. The dark circles around the eyes attested the work of years of grief — bitter and corroding.

What should I do? advance boldly, or retire noiselessly from the spot? If the first alternative presented perhaps the only chance of ever speaking to her, it might also prevent her ever again visiting the garden. This was a difficulty, and ere I had time to solve it, she arose to leave the spot. I coughed slightly — she halted and looked around, without any semblance of terror or even surprise, and so we stood face to face.

"You should have been on your rounds on this hour!" said she, with a manner of almost stern expression, and using the Spanish language.

"So I should, Señhora; but having forgot a part of my equipment, I returned to seek it."

"They would punish you severely if it were known," said she, in the same tone.

"I am aware of that," replied I, "and yet I would incur the penalty twice over to have seen one of whom my thoughts for every hour these months past have been full."

"Of me? — you speak of me?

"Yes, Señhora, of you. I know the presumption of my words; but bethink you that it is not in such a spirit they are

uttered, but as the cry of one humbled and humiliated to the very dust, and who, on looking at you, remembers the link that binds him to his fellows, and for the instant rises above the degradation of his sad condition."

"And it is through *me* — by looking at *me*— such thoughts are inspired!" said she, in an accent of piercing anguish. "Are you an English youth?"

"Yes, Señhora, as much as an Irishman can call himself."

"And is this the morality of your native land," said she, in English, "that you can feel an elevation of heart and sentiment from the contemplation of such as I am? Shame, sir — shame upon your falsehood, or worse shame upon your principle."

"I only know you as my day and night dreams have made you, lady — as the worshipper creates his own idol."

"But you have heard of me?" said she, speaking with a violence and rapidity that betokened a disordered mind. "All the world has heard of me, from the Havannah to Guajuaqualla, as the poisoner and the forger!"

I shook my head, dissentingly.

"It is then because you are less than human!" said she, scoffingly, "or you *had* heard it; but mind, sir, it is untrue. I am neither." She paused; and then, in a voice of terrible emotion, said, "There is enough of crime upon this poor head, but not that! And where have you lived, not to have heard of La Señhora Dias?" said she, with a hysteric laugh.

In a few words I told her how I had made part of a great gold-searching expedition, and been utterly ruined by the calamity which destroyed my companions.

"You would have sold yourself for gold wherewith to buy pleasure!" muttered she to herself.

"I was poor, lady — I must needs do something for my support."

"*Then* why not follow humble labour? What need of *wealth? Where* had you learned its want, or acquired the

taste to expend it? You could only have imitated rich men's vices, not their virtues that sometimes ennoble them."

The wild vehemence of her manner, as with an excessive rapidity she uttered these words, convinced me that her faculties were not under the right control of reason, and I followed her with an interest even heightened by that sad impression.

"You see no one — you speak to none," said she, turning round, suddenly, "else I should bid you forget that you have ever seen me."

"Are we to meet again, Señhora?" said I, submissively, as I stood beside the door of which she held the key in her hand.

"Yes — perhaps — I don't know;" and so saying, she left me.

Two months crept over, and how slowly they went! without my again seeing the Señhora. Were it not that the bouquets which each morning I fastened to the window-bars were removed before noon, I could have fancied that she had no other existence than what my dreamy imagination gave her. The heavy wooden "jalousies" were never opened — the door remained close locked — not a foot-tread marked the gravel near it. It was clear to me she had never crossed the threshold since the night I first saw her.

I fell into a plodding, melancholy mood. The tiresome routine of my daily life — its dull unvarying monotony began to wear into my soul, and I ceased either to think over the past, or speculate on the future; but would sit for hours long in a moody reverie, actually unconscious of everything.

Sometimes I would make an effort to throw off this despondency, and try, by recollection of the active energy of my own nature, to stir up myself to an effort of one kind or other; but the unbroken stillness — the vast motionless solitude *around me — the* companionless isolation in which I lived, *would resume their* influence, and with a weary sigh I would

resign myself to a hopelessness that left no wish in the heart save for a speedy death.

Even castle-building — the last resource of imprisonment — ceased to interest. Life had also resolved itself into a succession of dreary images of which the voiceless Prairie, the monotonous water-wheel, the darkened path of my midnight patrol were the chief: and I felt myself sinking day by day, hour by hour, into that resistless apathy through which no ray of hope ever pierces.

At last I ceased even to pluck the flowers for the Señhora's window. I deemed any exertion which might be avoided, needless; and taxed my ingenuity to find out contrivances to escape my daily toil. The garden I neglected utterly, and in the wild luxuriance of the soil the rank weeds soon effaced every sign of former culture. What a strange frame of mind was mine! even the progress of this ruin gave me a pleasure to the full as great as that once felt in witnessing the blooming beauty of its healthful vegetation. I used to walk among the rank and noisome weeds, with the savage delight of some democratic leader who saw his triumph, amid the downfall of the beautiful, the richly-prized and the valued, experiencing a species of insane pleasure in the thought of some fancied vengeance.

How the wild growth of the valueless weed overtopped the tender excellence of the fragrant plant — how the noisome odour overpowered its rich perfume — how, in fact, barbarism lorded it over civilization, became a study to my distorted apprehension; and I felt a diabolical joy at the victory.

A little more, and this misanthropy had become madness; but a change was at hand. I was sitting one night in the garden — it was already the hour when my "patrol" should have begun, but latterly I had grown indifferent to the call of duty: as Hope died out within me, so did Fear also, and I cared little for the risk of punishment; nay, more, a kind of *rebellious* spirit was gaining upon me, and I wished for some *accident which might* bring me into collision with some one. *As I sat thus*, I heard a footstep behind me: I turned, and

saw the Señhora close to me. I did not rise to salute her, but gazed calmly, and sternly, without speaking.

"Has the life of the dog imparted the dog's nature?" said she, scoffingly. "Why don't you speak?"

"I have almost forgotten how to do so," said I, sulkily.

"You can hear, at least?"

I nodded assent.

"And understand what you hear?"

I nodded again.

"Listen to me, then, attentively, for I have but a short time to stay, and have much to tell you! and first of all, do you wish to escape from hence?"

"Do I wish it!" cried I; and in the sudden burst, long dried-up sources of emotion opened out afresh, and the heavy tears rolled my down cheeks.

"Are your willing to incur the danger of attempting it?"

"Ay, this instant!"

"If so, the means await you. I want a letter conveyed to a certain person in the town of Guajuaqualla, which is about two hundred miles distant."

"In which direction?" asked I.

"You shall see the map for yourself; here it is," said she, giving me a small package, which contained a map and a mariner's compass; "I only know that the path lies over the Prairie, and by the banks of a branch of the Red River. There are villages and farmhouses when you have reached that region."

"And how am I to do so, unmolested, Señhora? — a foot-traveller on the Prairie must be overtaken at once."

"You shall be well mounted on a mustang worth a thousand dollars; but ride him without spurring. If he bring you safe to Guajuaqualla he has paid his price." She then proceeded to a detail, which showed how well and maturely every minute circumstance had been weighed and considered. The greatest difficulty lay in the fact that no water was to be met with nearer than eighty miles, which distance I should be *compelled to compass* on the first day. If this were a serious

obstacle on one side, on the other it relieved me of all apprehension of being captured after the first forty or fifty miles were accomplished, since my pursuers would scarcely venture further.

The Señhora had provided for everything. My dress, which would have proclaimed me as a runaway "settler," was to be exchanged for the gay attire of a Mexican horsedealer; a green velvet jacket and hose, all slashed and decorated with jingling silver buttons, pistols, sabre, and rifle to suit. The mustang, whose saddle was to be fitted with the usual accompaniment of portmanteau and cloak, was also to have the leathern purse of the "craft," with its massive silver lock, and a goodly ballast of doubloons within. Two days' provisions, and a gourd of brandy, completed an equipment which to my eyes was more than the wealth of an empire.

"Are you content?" asked she, as she finished the catalogue.

I seized her hand, and kissed it with a warm devotion.

"Now for the reverse of the medal. You may be overtaken; pursuit is almost certain; it may be successful; if so, you must tear the letter I shall give you to fragments, so small that all detection of its contents may be impossible. Sell your life dearly: this I counsel you, since a horrible death would be reserved for you if taken prisoner. Above all, don't betray me."

"I swear it!" said I, solemnly, as I held up my hand in evidence of the oath.

"Should you, however, escaping all peril, reach Guajuaqualla in safety, you will deliver this letter to the Señhor Estavan Olares, a well-known banker of that town. He will present you with any reward you think sufficient for your services, the peril of which cannot be estimated beforehand. This done — and here, mark me! I expect your perfect fidelity — all tie is severed between us. You are never to speak of me so long as I live; nor, if by any sun of Fortune we *should chance to* meet again in life, are you to recognise me. *You need be at* no loss for the reasons of this request: the

position in which I am here placed — the ignominy of an unjust sentence, as great as the shame of the heaviest guilt — will tell you why I stipulate for this. Are we agreed?"

"We are. When do I set out?"

"To-morrow, by daybreak; leave this a little before your usual time, pass out of the village, and, taking the path that skirts the beech wood, make for the Indian ground — you know the spot — at the cedar tree, close to that, you will find your horse all ready — the letter is here." Now for the first time her voice trembled slightly, and for an instant or two she seemed irresolute. "My mind is sometimes so shaken by suffering," said she, "that I scarcely dare to trust its guidance; and even now I feel as if the confidence I am about to place in an utter stranger, in an ——"

"Outcast, you would say," said I, finishing what she faltered at. "Do not fear, then, one humbled as I have been can take offence at an epithet."

"Nor is it one such as I am, who have the right to confer it," said she, wiping the heavy drops from her eyes: — "Good-bye, for ever! — since, if you keep your pledge, we are never to meet again." She gave me her hand, which I kissed twice, and then turning away, she passed into the house; and before I even knew that she was gone, I was standing alone in the garden, wondering if what had just occurred could be real.

If my journey was not without incident and adventure, neither were they of a character which it is necessary I should inflict upon my reader, who doubtless ere this has felt all the wearisome monotony of Prairie life by reflection. Enough that I say, after an interesting mistake of the "trail," which led me above a hundred miles astray! I crossed the Conchos River within a week, and reached Chihuahua, a city of considerable size, and far more pretensions than any I had yet seen in the "Far West."

Built on the narrow gorge of two abrupt mountains, the little town consists of one great straggling street, which occupies each side of a torrent that descends in a great tum-

bling mass of foam and spray along its rocky course. It was the time of the monthly market or fair when I arrived, and the streets were crowded with peasants and muleteers in every imaginable costume. The houses were mostly built with projecting balconies, from which gay-coloured carpets and bright draperies hung down, while female figures sat lounging and smoking their cigarettes above — the aspect of the place was at once picturesque and novel. Great wooden wagons of melons and cucumbers, nuts, casks of olive oil and wine; bales of bright scarlet cloth, in the dye of which they excel; pottery ware; droves of mustangs, fresh caught and capering in all their native wildness; flocks of white goats, from the Cerzo Gorde, whose wool is almost as fine as the Llama's; piles of firearms from Birmingham and Liège, around which groups of admiring Indians were always gathered; parroquets and scarlet jays, in cages; richly-ornamented housings for mule teams; brass-mounted saddles, and a mass of other articles, littered and blocked up the way, so that all passage was extremely difficult.

Before I approached the city, I had been canvassing with myself, how best I might escape from the prying inquisitiveness to which every stranger is exposed on entering a new community. I might have spared myself the trouble, for I found that I was perfectly unnoticed in the motley throng with which I mingled.

My strong-boned, high-bred mustang, indeed, called forth many a compliment as I rode past; but none had any eye, nor even a word, for the rider. At last, as I was approaching the inn, I beheld a small knot of men, whose dress and looks were not unfamiliar to me; and in a moment after, I remembered that they were the Yankee horse-dealers I had met with at Austin, some years before. As time had changed me far more than them, I trusted to escape recognition, not being by any means desirous of renewing the acquaintance. *I ought to say,* that besides my Mexican costume, I wore a *very imposing pair* of black moustaches and beard, the growth

of two years at "La Noria," so that detection was not very easy.

While I was endeavouring to push my way between two huge hampers of tomatos and lemons, one of this group, whom I at once recognised as Seth Chiseller, laid his hand on my beast's shoulder, and said, in Spanish, "The mustang is for sale?"

"No, Señhor," said I, with a true Mexican flourish; "he and all mine stand at your disposal, but I would not sell him."

Not heeding much the hackneyed courtesy of my speech, he passed his hands along the animal's legs, feeling his tendons, and grasping his neat pasterns. Then proceeding to the hocks, he examined them carefully; after which he stepped a pace or two backwards, the better to survey him, when he said, "Move him along in a gentle trot."

"Excuse me, Señhor, I came here to buy, not to sell. This animal I do not mean to part with."

"Not if I were to offer you five hundred dollars?" said he, still staring at the beast.

"Not if you were to say a thousand, Señhor," said I, haughtily; "and now pray let me pass into the court, for we are both in need of refreshment."

"He an't no Mexican, that 'ere chap," whispered one of the group to Chiseller.

"He sits more like a Texan," muttered another.

"He'll be the devil, or a Choctaw outright, but Seth will have his beast out of him," said another with a laugh; and with this the group opened to leave me a free passage into the inn-yard.

All the easy assurance I could put on did not convince myself that my fears were not written in my face as I rode forward. To be sure I did swagger to the top of my bent; and as I flung myself from the saddle, I made my rifle, my brass scabbard, my sabretache, and my spurs perform a crash that drew many a dark eye to the windows, and set many a fan fluttering in attractive coquetry.

"What a handsome Caballero! how graceful and well-looking!" I thought I could read in their flashing glances; and how pleasant was such an imaginary *amende* for the neglect I had suffered hitherto.

Having commended my beast to the hands of the ostler, I entered the inn with all the swaggering assurance of my supposed calling; but, in good earnest, with anything but an easy heart at the vicinity of Seth and his followers. The public room into which I passed was crowded with the dealers of the fair, in busy and noisy discussion of their several bargains; and had I been perfectly free of all personal anxieties, the study of their varied countenances, costumes, and manners, had been most amusing, combining as they did every strange nationality, — from the pale-faced, hatchet-featured New Englander, to the full-eyed, swarthy descendant of old Spain; the mongrel Frenchman of New Orleans, with the half-breed of the Prairies, more savage in feature than the Pawnee himself; the shining negro, the sallow Yankee, the Jew from the Havannah, and the buccaneer-like sailor, who commanded his sloop, and accompanied him as a species of body-guard — were all studies in their way, and full of subject for after-thought.

In this motley assemblage it may easily be conceived that I mingled unnoticed, and sat down to my mess of "frijoles with garlic" without even a passing observation. As I ate on, however, I was far from pleased by remarking that Seth and another had taken their seats at a table right opposite, and kept their eyes full on me with what, in better society, had been a most impudent stare. I affected not to perceive this, and even treated myself to a flask of French wine, with the air of a man revelling in undisturbed enjoyment; but all the rich bouquet, all the delicious flavour were lost upon me; the sense of some impending danger overpowered all else, and let me look which way I would, Seth and his buff-leather jacket, his high boots, immense spurs, and enormous horse pistols, *rose up before* me like a vision.

I read in the changeful expression of his features, the

struggle between doubt and conviction as to whether he had seen me before. I saw what was passing in his mind, and I tried a thousand little arts and devices to mystify him. If I drank my wine, I always threw out the last drops of each glass upon the floor; when I smoked, I rolled my cigar between my palms, and patted and squeezed it in genuine Mexican fashion. I turned up the points of my moustache like a true hidalgo, and played Spaniard to the very top of my bent.

Not only did these airs seem not to throw him off the scent, but I remarked that he eyed me more suspiciously, and often conversed in whispers with his companion. My anxiety had now increased to a sense of fever, and I saw that if nothing else should do so, agitation alone would betray me. I accordingly arose, and called the waiter to show me to a room.

It was not without difficulty that one could be had, and that was a miserable little cell, whitewashed, and with no other furniture than a mattress and two chairs. At least, however, I was alone; I was relieved from the basilisk glances of that confounded horse-dealer, and I threw myself down on my mattress in comparative ease of mind, when suddenly I heard a smart tap at the door, and a voice called out, with a very Yankee accent, "I say, friend, I want a word with you."

I replied, in Spanish, that if any one wanted me, they must wait till I had taken my "siesta."

"Take your siesta another time, and open your door at once; or mayhap I'll do it myself!"

"Well, sir," said I, as I threw it open, and feigning a look of angry indignation, the better to conceal my fear; "what is so very urgently the matter, that a traveller cannot take his rest, without being disturbed in this fashion?"

"Hoity-toity! what a pucker you're in, boy!" said he, shutting the door behind him; "and we old friends, too!"

"*When, or where,* have we ever met before?" asked I, *boldly.*

"For the 'where,' — it was up at Austin, in Texas; for the 'when,' — something like three years bygone."

I shook my head, with a saucy smile of incredulity.

"Nay, nay; don't push me farther than I want to go, lad. Let bygones be bygones, and tell me what's the price of your beast, yonder."

"I'll not sell the mustang," said I, stoutly.

"Ay, but you will, boy! and to me, too! And it's Seth Chiseller says it!"

"No man can presume to compel another to part with his horse against his will, I suppose?" said I, affecting a coolness I did not feel.

"There's many a stranger thing than *that* happens in these wild parts. I've known a chap ride away with a beast — just without any question at all!"

"That was a robbery!" exclaimed I, in an effort at virtuous indignation.

"It warn't far off from it!" responded Seth; "but there's a reward for the fellow's apprehension, and there it be!" and as he spoke he threw a printed handbill on the table, of which all that I could read with my swimming eyes were the words, "One Hundred Dollars Reward," — "a mare called Charcoal," — "taking the down trail towards the San José."

"There was no use in carrying that piece of paper so far," said I, pitching it contemptuously away.

"And why so, lad?" asked he, peering inquisitively at me.

"Because this took place in the Texas, and here we are in Mexico."

"Mayhap, in strict law that might be something," said he, calmly; "but were I to chance upon him, why shouldn't I pass a running-knot over his wrists, and throw him behind me on one of my horses? Who's to say 'You sha'n't?' or who's to stop a fellow that can ride at the head of thirty well *mounted lads*, with Colt's revolvers at the saddle-bow — tell *me that, boy!*"

"In the first place," said I, "the fellow who would let himself be taken and slung on your crupper, like a calf for market, deserves nothing better; and particularly so long as he owned a four-barrelled pistol, like this!" — and here I drew the formidable weapon from my breast, and held it presented towards him, in a manner that it is rarely agreeable to confront.

"Put down your irons, lad," said he, with the very slightest appearance of agitation in his manner, "we'll come to terms without burning powder."

"I ask for nothing better," said I, putting up my weapon; "but I'll not stand being threatened."

He gave a short dry laugh, as though the conceit of my speech amused him, and said, "Now to business — I want that mustang."

"You shall have him, Seth," said I, "the day he reaches Guajuaqualla, whither I am bound in all haste."

"I am a going north," said Seth, gruffly, "and not in that direction."

"You can send one of your people along with me, to fetch him back."

"Better to leave him with me now, and take a hack for the journey," said he. This was rather too much for my temper; and I ventured to say that he who was to receive a present should scarcely dictate the conditions accompanying it.

"It's a ransom, boy — a forfeit — not a present," said he, gravely.

"Let us see if you can enforce it, then," said I, instinctively grasping the weapon within my coat breast.

"There, now, you're angry again!" said he, with his imperturbable smile; "if we're to have a deal together, let us do it like gentlemen."

Now probably a more ludicrous caricature of that character could not have been drawn than either in the persons, the *manners, or the subject* of the transaction in hand; but *the word was talismanic*, and no sooner had he uttered it than *I became amenable to his very slightest suggestion.*

"Let me have the beast — I want him; and I see your holsters and saddle-bags have a jingle in them that tells me dollars are plenty with you; and as to this" — he threw the piece of paper offering the reward at his feet — "the man who says anything about it will have to account with Seth Chiseller — that's all."

"How far is it from this to Guajuaqualla?"

"About a hundred and twenty miles by the regular road, but there's a trail the miners follow makes it forty less. Not that I would advise you to try that line; the runaway niggers and the half-breeds are always loitering about there, and they're over ready with the bowie-knife, if tempted by a dollar or two."

Our conversation now took an easy, almost a friendly tone. Seth knew the country and its inhabitants perfectly, and became freely communicative in discussing them, and all his dealings with them.

"Let us have a flask of 'Aguadente,'" said he, at last, "and then we'll join the fandango in the court beneath."

Both propositions were sufficiently to my taste; and by way of showing that no trace of any ill-feeling lingered in my mind, I ordered an excellent supper and two flasks of the best Amontillado.

Seth expanded, under the influence of the grape, into a most agreeable companion. His personal adventures had been most numerous, and many of them highly exciting; and although a certain Yankee suspiciousness of every man and his motives tinged all he said, there was a hearty tone of good-nature about him, vastly different from what I had given him credit for.

The Amontillado being discussed, Seth ordered some Mexican "Paquaretta," of delicious flavour, of which every glass seemed to inspire one with brighter views of life; nor is it any wonder if my fancy converted the rural belles of the court-yard into beauties of the first order.

The scene was a very picturesque one. A trellised passage, roofed with spreading vines in full bearing, ran around

the four sides of the building, in the open space of which the dancers were assembled. Gay lamps of painted paper and rude pine-torches lit up the whole, and gave to the party-coloured and showy costumes an elegance and brilliancy which the severer test of daylight might have been ungenerous enough to deny. The olive-brown complexion — the flashing dark eyes — the graceful gestures — the inspiriting music — the merry voices — the laughter — were all too many ingredients of pleasure, to put into that little crucible, the human heart, and not amalgamate into something very like enchantment, — a result to which the Paquaretta perhaps contributed.

Into this gay throng Seth and I descended, like men determined, in Mexican phrase, to "take pleasure by both horns." It was at the very climax of the evening's amusement we entered. The dance was the Mexican fandango, which is performed in this wise: — a lady stepping into the circle, after displaying her attractions in a variety of graceful evolutions, makes the "tour" of the party in search of the Caballero she desires to take as her partner. It is at his option either to decline the honour by a gesture of deferential humility, or accepting it, he gives her some part of his equipment — his hat, his scarf, or his embroidered riding-glove, to be afterwards redeemed as a forfeit; the great amusement of the scene consisting in the strange penalties exacted, which are invariably awarded with a scrupulous attention to the peculiar temperament of the sufferer. Thus, a miserly fellow is certain to be mulcted of his money; an unwieldy mass of fears and terrors is condemned to some feat of horsemanship; a gourmand is sentenced to a dish of the least appetizing nature, and so on: each is obliged to an expiation which is certain to amuse the bystanders. While these are the "blanks" in the lottery, the prizes consist in the soft seductive glances of eyes that have lost nothing of Castilian fire in their transplanting beyond seas — in the graceful gestures of a partner to whom the native dance is like an expressive language, and whose motions are more eloquent than words — in being, perhaps,

the favoured of her whose choice has made you the h
the evening: and all these, even without the aid o
retta, are no slight distinctions.

Were the seductions less attractive, it is not a m
Irish blood has been set a-glowing with Spanish win
best fitted to resist them, nor assuredly ought Con C
be selected for such self-denial. I stood in the ci
wondering admiration, delighted with everything. C
age! glorious hour of the balmy night! excellent gra
how much of delicious enjoyment do I owe you ε
I suppose it is the case with every one, but I knov
with me, that wherever I am, or however situated,
diately single out some particular object for my esp
dilection. If it be a landscape, I at once pitch upor
for a cottage, a temple, or a villa; if it be a house, I
settle in my mind the room I would take as my own,
dow I would sit beside, the very chair I'd take to l
if it be a garden, I fix upon the walk among whose
ing blossoms I would always be found: and so, if the
be one of festive enjoyment, I have a quick eye to
whose air and appearance possess highest attractio
Not always for me the most beautiful — whose faul
lines a sculptor would like to chisel; but one whose
and loveliness are suggestive of the visions one h
boyhood, filling up, in rich colours, the mind-draw
we have so often gazed on, and made the heroine of a
little love-stories, only known to one's own heart.
dear! are not these about the very best of our advent
least, if they be not, they are certainly those we lool
with fewest self-reproaches.

In a mood of this kind it was that my eye reste
slightly-formed but graceful girl, whose dark eyes
thrice had met my own, and been withdrawn again wi
of indolent reluctance — as I fancied — very flatteri
She wore the square piece of scarlet cloth on her
fashionable among the Mexican peasantry, the e
which hung down with heavy gold tassels among

of her raven locks; a yellow scarf, of the brightest hue, was gracefully thrown over one shoulder, and served to heighten the brilliancy of her olive tint; her jupe, short and looped up with a golden cord, displayed a matchless instep and ankle. There was an air of pride — "fierté," even, — in the position of the foot, as she stood, that harmonized admirably with the erect carriage of her head, and the graceful composure of her crossed arms, made her a perfect picture. Nor was I quite certain that she did not know this herself: certain is it, her air, her attitude, her every gesture, were in the most complete "keeping" with her costume.

She was not one of the dancers, but stood among the spectators; and, if I were to pronounce from the glances she bestowed upon the circle, not one of the most admiring there her features either wearing an expression of passive indifference, or changing to a half smile of scornful contempt. As, with an interest which increased at each moment, I watched her movements, I saw that her scarf was gently pulled by a hand from behind: she turned abruptly, and, with a gesture of almost ineffable scorn, said some few words, and then moved proudly away to another part of the "court."

Through the vacant spot she had quitted I was able to see him who had addressed her. He was a young powerfully-built fellow, in the dress of a mountaineer; and though evidently of the peasant class, his dress and arms evinced that he was well to do in the world. The gold drop of his sombrero, the rich bullion tassels of his sash, the massive spurs of solid silver, being all evidences of wealth. Not even the tan-coloured hue of his dark face could mask the flush of anger upon it as the girl moved off; and his black eyes, as they followed, glowed like fire. To my amazement his glance was next bent upon me, and that, with an expression of hatred there was no mistaking. At first, I thought it might have been mere fancy on my part; then, I explained it as the unvanished cloud *still* lingering on his features; but at last I *saw plainly that the* insulting looks were meant for myself. *Let me look which side* I would, let me occupy my attention

how I might, the fellow's swarthy sullen face never turned from me for an instant.

I suppose something must have betrayed to my companion what was passing within me, for Seth whispered in my ear, "Take no notice of him — he's a Ranchero, and they are always bad 'uns to deal with."

"But what cause of quarrel can he have with me?" said I; "we never saw each other before."

"Don't you see what it is?" said Seth; "it's the muchacha, she's his sweetheart, and she's been a looking too long this way to please him."

"Well, if the girl has got such good taste!" said I, with a saucy laugh, "he ought to prize her the more for it."

"She *is* a neat 'un, that's a fact," muttered Seth; and at the same instant the girl walked proudly up to where I stood, and making a low curtsey before me, held out her hand. I suppose there must have been a little more than the ordinary enthusiasm in the manner I pressed my lips upon it, for *she* blushed, and a little murmur ran round the circle. The next moment we were whirling along in the waltz; I, at least, lost to everything, save the proud pleasure of what I deemed my triumph. The music suddenly changed to the fandango, of which dance I was a perfect master; and now the graceful elegance of my partner, and the warm plaudits of the company called forth my utmost exertions. As for her, she was the most bewitching representative of her native measure it is possible to conceive, her changeful expression following every movement of the dance; now, retiring in shrinking bashfulness, now, advancing with proud and haughty mien, now enticing to pursuit by looks of languishment, now, as if daring all advances, her flashing eyes would almost sparkle with defiance.

What a terrible battery was this to open upon the defenceless breastwork of a poor Irishman! How withstand the showering grape-shot of dark glances? — how resist the assault of graces that lurked in every smile and every gesture? Alas!

I never attempted a defence; I surrendered not "at," but "without," discretion, and tearing off the great embroidered scarf which I wore, all heavy with its gold fringe, I passed it round her taper waist in a very transport of enthusiasm.

While a buzz of approbation ran round the circle, I heard the words uttered on all sides, "Destago!" "A forfeit!"

"I'll try his gallantry," said the girl, as darting back from my arms, she retired to the very verge of the circle, and holding up the rich prize, gazed at it with wondering eyes: and now, exclamations of praise and surprise at the beauty of the tissue broke from all in turn.

"The Muchacha should keep the 'capotillo,'" said an old lynx-eyed duenna, with a fan as large as a fire-board.

"A Caballero rich as that should give her a necklace of real pearls," said another.

"I'd choose a mustang, with a saddle and trappings all studded with silver," muttered a third in her ear.

"I'll have none of these," said the girl, musing; "I must bethink me well if I cannot find something I shall like to look at with pleasure, when mere dress and finery would have lost their charm. I must have that which will remind me of this evening a long time hence, and make me think of him who made its happiness; and now what shall it be?"

"His heart's blood, if that will content you!" cried the mountaineer, as springing from his seat he tore the scarf from her hands, and dashed it on the ground, trampling it beneath his feet, and tearing it to very rags.

"A fight — a fight!" shouted out a number of voices; and now the crowd closed in upon the dancing space, and a hundred tongues mingled in wild altercation. Although a few professed themselves indignant that a stranger should be thus insulted, I saw plainly that the majority were with their countryman, whom they agreed in regarding as a most outraged and injured individual. To my great astonishment, I discovered that my friend Seth took the same view of the matter, and was even *more energetic* than the others in reprobation of *my conduct.*

"Don't you see," cried he to me, "that you have taken his sweetheart from him? The muchacha has done all this to provoke his jealousy."

"*Oui, oui*," said a thin miserable-looking Frenchman, *vous avez tiré le bouteille; il faut payer le vin.*"

In all probability, had not the crowd separated us most effectually, these comments and counsels had been all uttered "after the fact;" for I dashed forward to strike my antagonist, and was only held back by main force, as Seth whispered in my ear, "Take it coolly, lad; it must be a fight now, and don't unsteady your hand, by flying into a passion."

Meanwhile the noise and confusion waxed louder and louder, and from the glances directed towards me there was very little doubt how strongly public opinion pronounced against me.

"No, no!" broke in Seth — in reply to some speech whose purport I could only guess at, for I did not hear the words — "that would be a downright shame. Let the lad have fair play. There's a pretty bit of ground outside the garden, for either sword or pistol-work, whichever you choose it to be. I'll not stand anything else."

Another very fiery discussion ensued upon this; the end of which was, that I was led away by Seth and one of his comrades to my room, with the satisfactory assurance that at the very first dawn of day I was to meet the Mexican peasant in single combat.

"You have two good hours of sleep before you," said Seth, as we entered my room, "and my advice is, don't lose a minute of them."

It has been a mystery to me, up to the very hour I am writing in, how far my friend Seth Chiseller's conduct on this occasion accorded with good faith. Certainly, it would have been impossible for any one to have evinced a more chivalrous regard for my honour, and a more contemptuous disdain for my life, than the aforesaid Seth. He advanced full one hundred reasons for a deadly combat; the results of which, he confessed, were speculative matters of a most dreamy indif-

ference. Now, although it has almost become an axiom in these affairs that there is nothing like a bold decided friend, yet even these qualities may be carried to excess; and so I began to experience.

There was a vindictiveness in the way he expatiated upon the gross character of the insult I had received, the palpable openness of the outrage, that showed the liveliest susceptibility on the score of my reputation; and thus it came to pass, I suppose, from that spirit of divergence and contradiction so native to the human heart, that the stronger Seth's argument ran in favour of a most bloody retribution, the more ingenious grew my casuistry on the side of mercy: till, grown weary of my sophistry, he finished the discussion by saying — "Take your own road, then; and if you prefer a stiletto under the ribs to the chance of a sabre-cut, it's your own affair, not mine."

"How so? — why should I have to fear such?"

"You don't think that the villano will suffer a fellow to take his muchacha from him, and dance with her the entire evening before a whole company, without his revenge? No! no! they have different notions on that score, as you'll soon learn."

"Then what is to be done?"

"I have told you already, and I tell you once more: meet him to-morrow; — the time is not very distant now. You tell me that you are a fair swordsman: now these chaps have but one attack and one guard. I'll put you up to both; and if you are content to take a slight sabre-cut about the left shoulder, I'll show you how to run him through the body."

"And then?"

"Why then," said he, turning his tobacco about in his mouth, "I guess you'd better run for it. There'll be no time to lose. Mount your beast, and ride for the Guajuaqualla road; but don't follow it long, or you'll soon be overtaken. Turn the beast loose, and take to the mountains, where, when you've struck the miners' track, you'll soon reach the town in *safety.*"

Overborne by arguments and reasons, — many of which Seth strengthened by the pithy apothegm of "Bethink ye where ye are, boy! This is not England, nor Ireland neither!" — all my scruples vanished, and I set about the various arrangements in a spirit of true activity. The time was brief; since, besides taking a lesson in the broadsword, I had to make my will! The reader will probably smile at the notion of Con Cregan leaving a testament behind him; but the over-scrupulous Seth would have it so, and assured me, with much feeling, that it would "save a world of trouble hereafter, if anything were to go a bit ugly."

I therefore bequeathed to the worthy Seth my mustang and his equipments of saddle, holsters, and cloak-bag: my rifle and pistols, and bowie-knife, were also to become his, as well as all my moveables of every kind. I only stipulated that, in the event of the "ugly" termination alluded to, he would convey the letter with his own hands to Guajuaqualla, — a pledge he gave with the greater readiness that a reward was to be rendered for the service. There was some seventy dollars in my bag which, Seth said, need not be mentioned in the will, as they would be needed for the funeral. "It's costly hereabouts," said he, growing quite lively on the theme. "They puts ye in a great basket, all decked with flowers, and they sticks two big oranges or lemons in your hands; and the chaps as carry you are dressed like devils or angels, I don't much know which, — and they do make such a cry! — my eye for it, but if you wasn't dead, you'd not lie there long and listen to 'em!"

Now, although the subject was not one half so amusing to me as it seemed to Seth, I felt that strange fascination which ever attaches to a painful theme; and asked a variety of questions about the grave, and the ceremonies, and the masses, reminding my executor that, as a good Catholic, I hoped I should have the offices of the church in all liberality.

"Don't distress yourself about that," said he, "I'll learn a *lot of prayers* in Latin myself — 'just to help you on,' as a *body might say* — but, as I live, there goes the chaps to the

'Molino;'" and he pointed to a group of about a dozen or more, who, wrapped up in their large cloaks, took the way slowly and silently through the tall wet grass at the bottom of the garden.

I have ever been too candid with my kind reader to conceal anything from him. Let him not, therefore, I beg, think the worse of me, if I own that, at the sight of that procession, a strange and most uncomfortable feeling pervaded me. There seemed something so purpose-like in their steady regular tramp. There was a look of cold determination in their movement that chilled me to the heart. "Only to think!" muttered I, "how they have left their beds on this raw damp morning, at the risk of colds, catarrhs, and rheumatism, all to murder a poor young fellow who never injured one of them!"

Not a thought had I for the muchacha — the cause of all my trouble; my faculties were limited to a little routine, of which I myself was the centre, and I puzzled my brain in thinking over the human anatomy, and trying to remember all I had ever heard of the most fatal localities, and where one could be carved and sliced with the fullest impunity.

"Come along!" said Seth, "we've no time to lose — we must look out for a cheap mustang to wait for you on the Guajuaqualla road, and I have to fetch my sword, for this thing of yours is full eight inches too short." Seth now took my arm, and I felt myself involuntarily throwing a glance at the little objects I owned about the room — as it were a farewell look.

"What are you searching for?" said he, as I inserted my hand into my breast-pocket.

"It's all right," said I; "I wanted to see that I had the señhora's letter safe. If — if — anything — you understand me — eh?"

"Yes, yes; I'll look to it. They sha'n't bury you with it;" said he, with a diabolical grin, which made me positively detest *him for the moment.*

If Mr. Chiseller was deficient in the finer sympathies of our nature, he was endowed with a rare spirit of practical readiness. The "mustang" was found in the very first stable we entered, and hired for a day's pleasure — so he called it — for the sum of two crowns. A mountain lad was despatched to hold him for my coming, at a certain spot on the road. The sabre was fetched from his chamber, and in less than five minutes we were on our way to the Molino, fully equipped and "ready for the fray."

"Don't forget what I told you about the face guard — always keep the hilt of your weapon straight between your eyes, and hold the elbow low." This he kept repeating continually as we went along, till I found myself muttering the words after him mechanically — without attaching the slightest meaning to them. "The villain is a strong muscular chap, and perhaps he'll be for breaking down your guard by mere force, and cleaving you down with a stroke. If he tries it, you've only to spring actively to one side and give him your point, anywhere about the chest." From this he proceeded to discuss a hundred little subtleties and stratagems the Mexicans are familiar with — so that at last I regretted, from the very bottom of my soul, that the gage of battle had not fallen upon Seth himself, so much more worthy in every way of the distinction.

If I seemed full of attention to all he was saying, my thoughts, in truth be it spoken, were travelling a vastly different road. I was engaged in the performance of a little mental catechism, which ran somewhat in this wise: "If you escape this peril, Master Con, will it not be wise to eschew fandangos in future; or, at least, not indulge in them with other men's sweethearts? Beware, besides, of horse-dealers, of Xeres and Paquaretta; and above all, of such indiscretions as may make the 'Seth Chisellers' of this world your masters!" Ay, there was the sum and substance of my sorrows; that unlucky step about "Charry" and the lottery-ticket placed me *in a situation* from which there was no issue. I now saw, what *many have seen* before, and many will doubtless see again,

that crime has other penalties besides legal ones, and that the difficulty of conforming to an assumed good character, with even *one* lapse from the path of honesty, is very considerable.

"Are you attending to me, lad?" cried Seth, impatiently; "I was telling you about the cross-guard for the head."

"I have not heard one word of it," said I, frankly; "nor is it of the least consequence. All the talk in the world couldn't make a swordsman, still less would a few passing hints like those you give me. If the villano be the better man, there's an end of the matter."

Seth, less convinced by my reasonings than offended at them, spoke no more, and we approached the Molino in silence. As we neared the spot, we perceived the party seated in a little arbour, and by their gestures, as well as by a most savoury odour of garlic, evidently eating their breakfast.

"The fellows are jolly," said Seth; "had we not better follow their example? Here is a nice spot, and a table just at hand." At the same time he called out, "Muchacho, pon el vino en la mesa, and we'll think of somewhat to eat."

I tried to play indifferent, and seem at my ease, but it was no use. The vicinity of the other group, and, in particular, of a certain broad-shouldered member of it, whom I could detect through the leaves, and who certainly did not eat with the air of a man who felt it to be his last breakfast, spoiled all my efforts, and nipped them even as they budded.

"You don't eat," said Seth; "look at the villano yonder."

"I see him," said I, curtly.

"See how he lays in his prog!"

"Let him show that he can be as dexterous with the broadsword as with a carving-knife," said I, with a tremendous *effort.*

I became conscious of this from the sense of uneasiness I experienced as each horseman neared me, and the danger of pursuit aroused in me the instinct of self-preservation.

A rude sign-post at the foot of a rugged mountain path apprised me where the "miners' trail" led off to Guajuaqualla; so, dismounting from my "mustang," now wearied and blown by a pretty sharp pace for above seven miles, I turned the animal loose, and set off on foot. I know of no descent so great in life as from the "saddle" to the "sole!" from the inspiriting pleasure of being carried along at will, to the plodding slowness of mere pedestrianism. In the one case you "shoot your sorrows flying," in the other, they jog alongside of you all the way, halting with you when you lie down at noon, and taking share of the spring from which your parched lips are refreshed. Like an underbred acquaintance, they will not be denied; they are always "going *your* way;" and in their cruel civility they insist on bearing you company.

At a little cabaret of the very humblest order, I obtained some breakfast, and made purchase of a stock of bread and a gourd of wine, as I learned that nothing was to be had before I reached "Sanchez," the hut of an old miner, which was reckoned halfway to Guajuaqualla. This done, again I set forth on my journey.

The scenery was wild without being grand. There was bareness and desolation, but no sublimity. It was evidently a tract of such inferior fertility that few in a land so rich as this would select it for a resting-place; and accordingly I came upon no signs of habitation other than the shealings the shepherds raise at certain seasons when migrating with their flocks among the mountains.

It was exactly the character of landscape likely to increase and thicken the gloom of sad thoughts; and, indeed, mine wanted little assistance. This last exploit left a weight like lead upon my heart. All my sophistry about self-defence and wounded honour, necessity, and the like, could not cover the *fact that I had* taken away a man's life in a foolish brawl

rom the very outset of which the whole fault lay on *my* ide.

"So much," said I, "for trying to be a 'gentleman." Every step in this disastrous pursuit would seem to have a penalty attached to it; and, after all, I am just as far from the goal as when I set out."

That day seemed a year in length; and were I to attempt to chronicle it, the reader would confess himself convinced before I had half finished; so that, for both our sakes, I'll not "file my bill of particulars," as my respected father would have said, but at once come to the hour when the sun approached the horizon, and yet not anything like a human dwelling came in sight; and I still plodded along, sad and weary, and anxious for rest. If the events which I am about to record have little in them of extraordinary interest, they at least were the turning-points in my humble destiny, and, therefore, kind reader, with your permission, we'll give them a chapter to themselves.

CHAPTER VI.

"The Discovery."

I HAD walked now for nearly twelve hours without discovering any appearance of Sanchez' cabin, in which I had hoped to pass the night. My prairie experience assured me that I had not lost the "trail," and yet if any light were burning for miles around, the elevated spot on which I stood should make it visible. Although much fatigued, there was nothing for it but to proceed, and, at length, I found myself in a narrow valley, which Seth had heard described as the situation in which the miner's hut stood. It was dark and gloomy, but the hope that I was nearing the spot cheered me, and I walked on, footsore and tired as I was. Once or twice I thought I heard the bark of a dog. I stopped to listen. I shouted aloud, I whistled, but to no end. After an interval, however, the sounds were repeated, and now, I could detect, — not the bark, — but the low plaintive wail of an animal seemingly in pain. As it not unfrequently happens that the sheep-dogs are attacked by wolves, it immediately occurred to me such might be the present case: so I looked to the caps of my revolver, and hastened on in the direction of the cries.

The wailing sounds grew fuller and louder as I advanced, and now I could distinguish that they were the cries of an animal in grief, and not of one in bodily pain. I increased my speed to the utmost, and suddenly I felt the warm tongue of a dog touch my hand, and his tail brush my legs, in sign of friendly welcome. I stopped to pat and caress him, but the poor creature uttered another cry, so full of sorrow, that all other thoughts were routed on the instant.

He now preceded me, turning at each moment as if to see that I followed, and whining in a low faint tone, as before. *We had not long* proceeded thus, when he stopped suddenly,

and set up a cry the most shrill and heart-thrilling. I saw that we were in front of a miserable shealing, the door of which lay open; but all was dark within. I struck a light with my flint, and lighted a little taper. To my surprise, the hut contained several articles of furniture; but I had not more than time to notice them, when the dog, darting forward, placed his fore-paws upon a low settle-bed, and gave a dismal howl. I turned, and beheld the figure of a very old man, his white beard hanging down to his chest, as he lay in what seemed a heavy sleep. I touched him; he was cold. I placed my hand on his heart; it was still. I tried to detect breathing; there was none — he was quite dead!

The poor dog appeared to watch me with intense interest, as, one by one, I tried these different signs of life; but when he saw the hand fall heavily from my own, he again set up his cries, which now lasted for several minutes. The scene was a sad and touching one. The poor old miner — for such his dress and the scattered implements of the craft bespoke him, — forgotten by all the world save by his dog, lay in all the seeming calm of sleep. A cup of water stood near him, and a little wooden crucifix lay on the bed, where probably it had fallen from his fingers. Everything around betokened great poverty. The few articles of furniture seemed as if they had been fashioned by himself, being of the rudest workmanship: his lamp was a dried gourd, and his one chair had been a stump, hollowed out with a hatchet. The most striking feature of all was a number of printed paragraphs, cut from old newspapers and magazines, and nailed against the planking of the hut; and these seemed to convey a little history of the old miner, so far, at least, as the bent and object of his life were implied. They were all, without exception, exaggerated and high-flown accounts of newly-discovered "placers," — rich mines of gold, — some in the dark plains of the Ukraine, some in the deep forests of Mexico, some in the interior of Africa, and on the far-away shores of the Pacific. Promises of golden harvest, visions of wealth rolling in vast abundance, *great oceans of gain* before the parched and thirsting lips of

toil and famine! Little thought they who, half in the wantonness of fancy, coloured these descriptions, what seeds they were sowing in many a rugged nature! what feverish passions they were engendering! what lures to wile men on and on, through youth, and manhood, and age, with one terrible fascination to enslave them!

If many of these contained interesting scraps of adventure and enterprise in remote and strange countries, others were merely dry and succinct notices of the discovery of gold in particular places, announcements, which nothing short of an innate devotion to the one theme, could possibly have dwelt upon; and these, if I were to judge from the situations they occupied, were the most favoured paragraphs, and those most frequently read over: they were the daily food with which he fed his hope, through, doubtless, long years of suffering and toil. It was the oil which replenished the lamp, when the wick had burned to the very socket!

How one could fancy the old Gambusino as he sat before his winter fire, half dozing in the solitude of his uncompanionable existence, revelling in all the illusions with which his mind was filled! With what sympathy must he have followed his fellow-labourers in every far-away quarter of the globe! how mourned over their disappointments, how exulted in their successes! These little scraps and sentences were the only links that tied him to the world — they were all that spoke to him of his own species!

As I went about the hut, the appearance of the greatest poverty and privation struck me on every side: his clothing, worn to very tatters, had been mended by skins of beasts and patches of canvas; the tools with which he worked, showed marks of rude repair, that proved how "he to himself sufficed," without aid from others.

I passed the night without sleep, my mind full of the melancholy picture before me. When day broke, I walked *forth into* the cool air to refresh myself, and found, to my *astonishment*, that the spot had been a Placer of once great

repute, at least so the remains around attested. The ruined framework of miners' huts — the great massive furnaces for smelting — huge cradles, as they are called, for gold sifting — long troughs, formed of hollowed trunks, for washing — lay scattered on all sides. The number of these, showed what importance the spot had once possessed, and the rotten condition in which they now were, proved how long it had been deserted by all save him, who was now to take his rest, where, for many a weary year, he had toiled and laboured.

A little cross, decorated with those insignia of torture so frequently seen in Catholic countries — the pincers, the scourge, and the crown of thorns — showed where Piety had raised an altar beside that of Mammon, and underneath this I resolved to lay the poor old Gambusino's bones, as in a Christian grave. I could not divest my mind of the impression, that some power, higher than mere chance, had led me to the spot, to perform those last offices to the poor outcast. Having eaten my breakfast, which I shared with the dog, I set to work to fashion something that should serve as a coffin. There was timber in abundance, and the old miner's tools sufficed for all I needed. My labour, however, was only completed as night closed in, so that I was obliged to wait for morning to finish my task.

Wearied by my exertions, I slept soundly, and never awoke till the bright sunbeams pierced through the chinks of the log hut, and streamed in amidst its dusky atmosphere; then I arose, and placed the old man in his coffin. I sat down beside it, and, as I looked at the calm cold features, I could not help reflecting, that even he had not been more an outcast from his fellows than I was myself. If fate had cast *his* lot in the solitude of this dreary region, he was not more alone in the world than *I*, who had neither home nor family. How strange was it too, that it should have devolved upon *me* to pay him these last rites. No — no — this could not be ACCIDENT. The longer I dwelt *upon this* theme, the more strongly was I *impressed by this* one conviction; and now, looking back,

after the lapse of years, that feeling is but more confirmed by time.

Taking the shovel and the pick, I set forth to dig the grave, the poor dog following at my heels, as though knowing in what cause I was labouring. The earth was hard and stony, so that at first I made but little progress, but soon I reached a clayey soft soil, which again was succeeded by a dense, firm stratum of stones, impacted closely together, like a pavement made by hands; indeed it was difficult to conceive it otherwise, the stones being so nearly of the same size, and laid down with a regularity so striking and purposelike. I proceeded to loosen them with the barreta, but, to my surprise, no sooner had I displaced this layer than another exactly similar displayed itself underneath. If this be "Nature's handywork," thought I, "it is the strangest thing I ever saw." I laboured hard to remove this second tier, and now came down upon a light gravelly soil, into which the barreta passed easily. Shall I own that it was with a sense of disappointment that I perceived this? It was not that my expectations had taken any distinct or palpable form, but their vagueness somehow had not excluded hope!

As I struck down the iron barreta into the light earth, I sat down and fell into a musing fit, from which the dog aroused me by licking my hands, and looking up into my face, as though reproaching me for deserting my task. I arose at once and set to work in right earnest. The grave was now full five feet in depth, and needed only to be made a little longer. It was after about an hour's hard labour, and my task was all but completed, when the barreta struck a stone which it was requisite to remove; it was a large and heavy one, and much more firmly impacted in the earth than I at first supposed, and it was only by splintering it with the iron "crow" that I was able to succeed. As I lifted the fragments and threw them away, my hands came in contact with a soft substance underneath, that, to the feel at least, resembled the skin of a bear *with the wool* or hair on. I cleared away the earth, and *to my astonishment* what I at once knew to be a piece

buffalo hide, smeared over with a peculiar oil the Indians use, to prevent rotting or decomposition. I drew forth my knife and ripped it open; a strong skin of undressed buck was now laid bare; again I applied my knife vigorously to this, and as the sharp steel ran freely along, a glittering heap of gold disclosed itself before me, and rolled in fragments to my feet!

I cannot attempt to describe the emotions of that moment, as with a heart bursting with delight, I ran my fingers through the heaps of shining metal, many of them larger than my closed fist. I pulled off my cap and filled it: I opened my handkerchief, and in a few moments that also was crammed: I stuffed my pockets; but the treasure seemed inexhaustible. I arose, and hastened to the hut for the great canvas bag in which the poor miner used to keep his chesnuts, and oh! the terror that came over me now, lest I should be seen; lest any other should discover me. With the speed that fear alone can supply I soon filled the sack, not alone with gold, but also with several little leather bags, which I discovered contained gems and precious stones, emeralds principally, with opals, sapphires, and rubies, some of a size and colour I had never seen equalled before. There were eight of these bags marked with some enigmatical letters, of which I did not know the meaning, nor in good truth, did I puzzle myself to discover. The wealth, unbounded as it seemed, needed no explanation; there it lay glittering upon the grass beneath the morning sun, and there I sat amidst it, as Aladdin might have sat amidst the treasures of his mine.

As I opened the bags one after another, in eager impatience, I came upon one filled with papers, and these I quickly discovered were receipts for deposits of large sums placed at various times in the hands of Don Xafire Hijaros, banker, at Guajuaqualla, by Menelaus Crick! Yes, these were the hidden treasures for which the Black Boatswain of Anticosti had *endured the* tortures of the burning iron and the *steel, the terrible* agonies of the flesh pincers, and the slow, *lingering pains of* paralysis. These then were the visions

that haunted his dotage in the very night I had seen him, as he struggled in some imaginary conflict, and patted the ground in some fancied act of concealment! A sudden chill ran through me as I thought by what horrible deeds of crime and blood all this treasure might — nay, must — have been amassed! What terrible acts of murder and assassination! Many of the gems were richly set, and showed that they had been worn. Some of the emeralds had been extracted from ornaments or taken from the hilts of daggers or swords. Violence and blood had stained them all! there could not be a doubt of it: and now there arose within me a strange conflict, in which the thirst for wealth warred with a feeling of superstition, that whispered, "No luck could go with gain so bought!" The perspiration rolled in great drops down my face; my heart swelled and throbbed with its emotions; the arteries of my temples beat with a force that seemed to smite the very brain, as I canvassed this vital question, "Dare I touch wealth so associated with deeds of infamy?"

If my wishes arranged themselves on one side, all my fears were marshalled on the other, and what foes can wage a more terrible conflict! The world, with its most attractive pleasures, its thousand fascinations, all the delusions that gold can buy, and convert into realities, beckoned here. Horrible fancies of an unknown vengeance, a Nemesis in crime unexpiated, menaced there! May I never have to preside in a court where the evidence is so strongly opposed; where the facts are so equally balanced. If, at one instant, I beheld myself the gorgeous millionaire, launching forth into the wide ocean of unexplored enjoyment, at the next, I saw myself crawling upon the earth, maimed and crippled like the old negro slave; a curse upon me; the cries of widowed mothers ringing in my ears; the curses of ruined fathers tracking me wherever I went! I cannot tell what verdict my poor empannelled conscience might have brought in at last; but suddenly a new witness appeared in the court, and gave a most decided turn *to the case.* This was no less than "the Church," whose *testimony gently* insinuated that if the matter were one of

difficulty, it was not yet without a solution. "It is true, Master Con," whispered she, "that these treasures have an odour of rapine, but let us see if the Church cannot purify them. A silver lamp to the Virgin can throw a lustre upon deeds that have not 'loved the light.' An embroidered petticoat can cover a great many small sins, and the incense that rises from a gold censer, offered by pious hands, will do much to correct the pungency of even the saltest tears."

Build a chapel, Con; endow a nunnery; or, if you don't like shutting up young ladies, let it be a "monkery;" make an investment in hair-cloth shirts and cord girdles; buy shares in the grand Purgatory scheme, and take out "next world scrip," in the shape of masses, jubilees, and novenas. You can keep a bishop, without feeling the cost, and have a whole candle manufactory perpetually at the service of "our lady," without being obliged to curtail one of your own wax-lights. What a revulsion did this bright thought give to all my previous doubtings! not only satisfying my scruples here, but suggesting very comfortable associations for hereafter. By this proceeding, Con, thought I, you are "hedging against hereafter:" you may be a Sardanapalus while you live, and a saint after death: it's betting upon the "double event," with all the odds in your favour.

I must say, for the sake of my credit, that I resolved to "do the thing handsomely." I determined that a finer virgin should not be seen than mine, and that if a "Saint Cregan" could be discovered in the catalogue, I'd adopt him as my patron, at any cost; neither would I forget the poor old miner in my pious offerings: he should have masses said for him, for a full twelvemonth to come, and I'd offer a silver pick-axe to any of the calendar who would deign to accept it. In a word, there was nothing that money could do (and what can it not?) that I would not engage to perform, so that the Church should consent to take me into partnership.

Never was a poor head exposed to such a conflict of discordant thought. Plans of pleasures and pilgrimages, *gorgeous visions of enjoyment*, warring with fancies of sackcloth

and scourges; sumptuous dinners, equipages, theatres, balls, and festivities, mingling with fastings, processions, and mortifications, made up a chaos, only a shade above downright insanity.

The day wore on, and it was late in the afternoon ere I bethought me of the poor Gambusino, beside whose open grave I still sat, lost in speculation. "Poor fellow!" said I, as I hoisted his coffin on my shoulder, "you have got a rich pall-bearer for one who died in such poverty; you little thought you would be borne to the grave by a millionaire!" As I said this — I shame to own it — there was a tinge of self-commendation in the notion, as though inferring — "See what a noble fellow I am! with gold and gems, such as an emperor might envy; and yet look at me, carrying a poor old miner's body to the grave, just as if we were equals!"

"It's very handsome of you, Con — that I must say!" whispered I to myself; but, somehow, the poor dog did not appear to take the same exalted notion of my magnanimity, but was entirely engrossed by his sorrow; for he lay crouching upon the earth, uttering cries the most piteous and heart-rending, at each shovelful I threw in the grave.

"Cheer up, poor fellow!" said I, patting him, "you shall have a gold collar, and a clasp of real emerald." How naturally does a rich man recur to wealth as the cure for every affliction! How difficult for him to believe that gold is not a sovereign remedy for all disorders.

As for the dog, poor brute! he took no more heed of my consolation, than he noticed my altered condition — of which, by his familiarity, he showed himself totally unconscious. How differently had he behaved, thought I, had he been a man! What sudden respect had he felt for me, — what natural reluctance to obtrude himself on me, — how honoured by my notice, — how distinguished by my favour! It is plain the dog is a very inferior animal; his perceptions are not fine enough to distinguish between the man of wealth and the *pauper!*

These and very similar reflections engaged me while I completed my task; after which, I carried my precious burthens off, and deposited them within the hut. By this time I was very hungry, but had nothing to eat, save the fragments that remained from my breakfast, — a singular meal for one who, in a fitting place, could have dined sumptuously, and off vessels of gold and silver! I had the appetite of a poor man, however, and ate heartily; and then, taking my gourd of wine, sat down beside a little spring that issued from the rock, to think over my future.

Perhaps my whole life — not wanting in hours of pleasure and enjoyment — never presented anything so truly delightful as that evening.

The season of gratification which I had dreamed of, sighed, panted, and prayed for, was now to be mine. I was at last to be a "gentleman," so far, at least, as immense wealth and a very decided taste for spending it could make me. But were these, I flatteringly asked myself, all my qualifications? Was I not master of three or four languages? Had I not become an expert shot, an excellent rider, a graceful dancer, with some skill upon the guitar and the mandolin? Could I not contend, in most exercises where strength and activity were required with any? Had I not travelled and seen something of the world and its ways? Ay, marry, and a little more of both, than was usual for young gentlemen of fortune!

Of personal advantages it might not become me to speak; but the truth requires me to say, that nature had dealt very handsomely by me. And now, I ask of the fair reader, — the unfair one I put out of court on the occasion — "are not these very pretty chances with which to woo fortune?" Less sanguine spirits would perhaps have sighed for more, and asked for a hundred gifts, of whose use and value I knew nothing — such as birth, family influence, and the like. As for me, I was content with the "hand of trumps" Fate had dealt with me; I owned frankly, that if I lost the game, it *must be for lack of skill*, and not of luck.

My plans were very simple. Once at Guajuaqualla, I should find out where Donna Maria de los Dolores lived, and then, providing myself with a suitable equipage and servants, I should proceed to pay my addresses in all form, affecting to have resumed my real rank and station, from which on our first acquaintance, a passing caprice had withdrawn me. I anticipated, of course, very shrewd inquiries as to my family and fortune; but I trusted to "native wit" to satisfy these, secretly resolving at the time, that I would avoid lying for the future; and apropos of this propensity, I had never indulged in it, save from that vagrant impulse, that tempts a child to scamper over the flower plat of a garden, instead of keeping to the gravel — the great charm being found, in the secret that it "was wrong." And, oh, ye dear, good, excellent souls whose instincts are always correct, who can pass knockers on doors and not wish to wring them off! — who see gas-lamps in lonely spots, and never think of breaking them; who neither "humbug" the stupid, nor mystify the vain: who "take life" seriously; forgive the semibarbarism of our Celtic tastes, which leads us to regard "Fun" as the very honey of existence, and leads us to extract it from every flower in life's path!

When I "lied" — as only the great "Pinto" ever lied more atrociously — I was more amused by my own extravagances, than were my listeners. I threw out my inventions among stupid folk, as a rich man flings his guinea among a group of beggars, to enjoy the squabbling and contending for such an unlooked-for prize.

And now I was going to abandon the habit, as one unsuited to the responsibilities of a rich man's station! Oh dear, what a sigh honest Jack Falstaff must have heaved when he swore "he would eschew sack and low company, and live cleanly."

I now addressed myself more practically to my work, and, seeing that it would be quite impossible for me to carry the great bulk of my treasure to Guajuaqualla, I replaced the *canvas sack*, with the gold, and some of the larger bags

of the gems in the ground, and merely took those that contained the paper securities, and some of the more valuable emeralds, along with me.

In parting with my wealth, even for a short absence, I confess my feelings were very poignant. A thousand fears beset me, and I turned to survey the spot beneath which it lay, wondering if there was any indication to mark the concealed riches below. All, however, looked safe and plausible; and I proceeded on my way, with a heart as easy, as, I suppose, rich men's hearts are permitted to be!

I believe the road along which I journeyed lay in the midst of a fertile and pleasing tract: I believe, I say, for I own I saw nothing of it. The river along which I walked seemed silver, molten silver, to me; the fruit-trees bore apples of pure gold; the stars which studded the morning sky seemed sapphires and diamonds; the dewdrops on the grass were opals all. If I sat down to rest myself, I instantly took one of my precious bags from my pocket, to gaze at the bright treasures it contained, and feast my eyes with brilliancy.

At last I found myself on the great high road, and as the signpost told me, only "tres leguas" — three leagues — from Guajuaqualla. For a few copper coins I obtained a seat upon a peasant's "carro," and journeyed along more agreeably, secretly laughing to myself at the strange conveyance that carried "Cæsar and his fortunes."

The peasant was on old man, who lived by selling watermelons, gourds, and cucumbers in the city, and knew most of its well-known inhabitants. It was therefore a good opportunity for me to learn something of those in whom I was interested. He told me that the banker, Don Xafire Hijaros, had died several years ago, but that his son Manuel carried on the business, and was reputed to be the richest man in Guajuaqualla. It was said that the great wealth of the house had been accumulated, in ways, and by means, that would not bear too close scrutiny. Large sums had been, it was alleged, lodged in his hands by negroes and Indians, working at the mines, the owners of which were often made away with

of conduct were conspicuously displayed. Pictures, representing dreadful catastrophes, by falling masses of rock — irruptions of torrents — and down-pouring cataracts, showed what fates were ever in store for those who "forgot the Church." And, as if to heighten the effect, whenever a cayman or a jaguar was "sloping off" with a miner in his mouth — a respectable saint was sure to be detected in the offing — wiping his eyes in compassion, but not stirring a finger to his assistance.

I will not say that these specimens of pictorial piety induced any strong religious feeling to my mind, but they certainly amused me highly, and although hungry from a long fast, I stopped, full twenty times on my way to the Posada, to gaze and wonder at them.

At the "Mono" (the "Ape"), a beast, which, at first I mistook for a certain historical character, to whom popular prejudice always vouchsafes a tail, I put up, and having discussed a very sumptuous breakfast, sent for the landlord, a little dark-visaged Jew from Pernambuco.

"I hear," said I, arranging myself in an attitude of imposing elegance, "I hear, Señhor Maestro, that my people and equipages have not arrived yet, and I begin to feel a great anxiety for their safety. Can you learn from any of the Muleros if they have seen two carriages, with four mules each, on the Chihuahua road?"

"I have just inquired," said the Jew, with a sly, almost impertinent leer, "and his Excellency's suite have not been seen."

"How provoking!" said I, impatiently; "this comes of indulging that capricious taste for adventure which always inclines me to a solitary ramble among mountains; and now, here I am, without clothes, baggage, horses, servants, — in fact, with nothing that a person of my condition is accustomed to have about him."

The Jew's face changed its expression during this speech, and from a look of droll malice, which it wore at first, assumed *an air of almost* open insolence, as he said, —

"Señhor Viajador, I am too old to be imposed upon by these fooleries. The traveller who enters an inn on his feet, with ragged clothes and tattered shoes, takes too high a flight when he raves of equipage and followers."

I bethought me of the lesson I once gave the mate of the transport ship at Quebec, and I lay back indolently in my chair, and stared coolly at the Jew. "Son of Abraham," said I, with a slow intonation, "take care what you say. I indulge in a vast variety of caprices, some of which the severe world calls follies; but there is one which I never permit myself, namely, to suffer the slightest liberty on the part of an inferior. I give you this piece of information for your guidance, since it is possible that business with the banker Don Manuel Hijaros may detain me a few days in this place, and I desire that the lesson be not lost upon you."

The Jew stood while I delivered these words, a perfect ideal of doubt and embarrassment. The pretentious tone, contrasted with the ragged apparel — the air of insufferable pride, with all the semblance of poverty, and the calm composure of confidence, seemed to him singular features in one whose apparent destitution might have suggested humility.

"I see your embarrassment," said I, "and I forgive your error, and now to business. I have several visits to pay in this neighbourhood; my people may not arrive for a day or two; and I cannot afford the delay of waiting for them. Can you tell if there be anything suitable in the way of equipage for a man of rank to be had here? Something simple of course, as befitting the place — a plain carriage, with four mules — if Andalusian, all the better; two lazadores, or outriders, will be sufficient, as I wish to avoid display; the liveries and equipment may be plain also."

"There is at this moment, Señhor, the open carriage of the late Gobernador of Guajuaqualla, to be sold; he had not used it when he was called away by death: that and his six mules — not *Andalusian, it is* true, but of the black breed of the Ha*bannah, are now at* your Excellency's disposal."

"And the price," said I, not seeming to notice the half-impertinent smile that curled his lip as he spoke.

"Three thousand crowns, Señhor; less than half their cost."

"A mere trifle," said I, carelessly, "if the carriage please me."

"Your Excellency can see it in the court beneath."

I followed the Jew as he led the way into the open "cour," and, after passing across it, we entered a spacious building, where, amidst a whole hospital of ruined and dilapidated caleches, carres, and wagons, stood a most beautiful britscka, evidently imitated from some London or Parisian model. It was of a dark chocolate colour, with rich linings of pale blue silk. The arms of the late Gobernador were to have been painted on the doors, but fortunately were not begun when he died, so that the "carroza" seemed in every respect a private one. The Jew next showed me the team of mules, magnificent animals of fifteen and half hands in height, and in top condition. The harness and housings were all equally splendid and suitable.

"If your Excellency does not deem them unworthy of you," said he, with a smile of most treacherous meaning, "they are certainly a great bargain. I have myself advanced fifteen hundred piastres upon them."

"I'll take them," said I, curtly; "and now for the servants."

"The coachman and a few lacqueys are here still, your Excellency; but their liveries had not been ordered when the sad event occurred."

"Send the first tailor in the place to my apartment," said I; "and if there be a diamond merchant, or a gem valuer here, let him come also."

"I am myself a dealer in precious stones, your Excellency," *replied the Jew*, with a more submissive air than he had yet *exhibited.*

"Come with me, then," said I; "for I always carry some of my less valuable trinkets about with me, as the least cumbrous mode of taking money. Leaving the landlord in the sitting-room, I passed into my chamber, and speedily re-entered with a handsome emerald ring upon my finger, and a ruby brooch of great size in my breast.

The Jew's eyes were lit up with a lustre, only inferior to that of the gems, as he saw them, and, in a voice tremulous with eagerness, he said, "Will your Excellency dispose of these?"

"Yes," said I, carelessly; "there are others also, which I am determined to turn into cash. What value would you put upon this ring?"

"Five hundred crowns, Señor, if it be really as pure as it seems."

"If that be your valuation, friend," rejoined I, "I would be a purchaser, not a seller, in this city. That gem cost me six thousand piastres! to be sure, something of the price must be laid to the charge of historical associations. It was the present of the Sultan Al Hadgid ak Meerun-ak-Roon, to the Empress Matilda."

"Six thousand piastres!" echoed the Jew, whose astonishment stopped short at the sum, without any regard for the great names I had hurled at him. "I believe I may have paid a trifle too much," said I, smiling; "the Prince of Syracuse thought it dear! But then here is a much more valuable stone, which only cost as much:" and so saying, I took from my pocket an immense emerald, which had once formed the ornament of a dagger.

"Ah, Dios! that is fine," said the Jew, as he held it between him and the light; "and were it not for the flaw, would be a rare prize!"

"Were it not for the flaw, friend," said I, "it would still be where it stood for upwards of eight hundred years — in the royal crown of Hungary — in the 'Schatz-Kammer' of Pres-*burg. The Emperor* Joseph had it mounted in his own

poignard; from his hands it reached the Calton's of Auersberg, and then, at the value of six thousand piastres, by a wager, came into my own."

"At what price would you now dispose of it?" asked he, timidly.

"A friend might have it for ten thousand," said I, calmly; "to the world at large the price would be twelve."

"Ah, your Excellency! such sums rest not in our humble city! You must go to Madrid or Grenada for wealth like that."

"So I suspect," said I, coolly. "I will content myself with depositing them with my banker for the present; to sell them here would be a needless sacrifice of them."

"And yet, Señhor, I would willingly be the purchaser of that gem," said he, as he stood, fascinated by the lustre of the stone, from which he could not take his eyes. "If six thousand five hundred piastres —"

"I have said ten to a friend, my honest Israelite," interrupted I.

"I am but a poor man, your Excellency — a poor struggling hardworking man — content if he but gain the humblest profit by his labour; say, then, seven thousand piastres, and I will sell my mules to make up the amount."

"I will say twelve, and not a doubloon less, 'Señhor Judio,' but a friend may have it for ten."

"Ah! if your 'Alteza' would but say eight. Eight thousand piastres counted down upon the table in honest silver," said he; and the tears stood in his eyes as he supplicated.

"Be it so," said I, "but upon one condition. Should you ever reveal this, or should you ever speak of the transaction in any way, there is no manner of evil and mischief I will not work you. If it cost me half my fortune, I will be your ruin; for I refused to part with that same to the Primate of Seville, and he would never forgive me if the story should reach his ears."

The Jew wished the Patriarchs to witness his oath of secrecy, and though each of us was well aware that the other was lying, somehow we seemed satisfied by the exchange of our false coinage I suppose we acted on the same principle as the thieves, who could not keep their hands out of each other's pockets, although they knew well there was nothing there.

Whatever the Jew's suspicion of the means by which I had become possessed of such wealth, he prudently thought that he might reap more profit by falling in with my plans, than by needlessly scrutinising my character; and, so far, he judged wisely.

The contract for the carriage I completed on the spot, and having engaged the servants and ordered their liveries—plain suits of brown with gold tags, aiguilettes — I gave directions for my own wearing apparel, in a style of costly magnificence that confirmed me in the title of "Alteza" given by all who came in contact with me. These occupations occupied the entire morning, and it was only late in the afternoon that I had spare time to recreate myself by a walk in the garden of the inn before dinner; a promenade which, I am free to own, was heightened in its enjoyment by the rich rustling sounds of my heavy silk robe-de-chambre, and the soft downy tread of my velvet slippers on the smooth turf. It was a delicious moment! the very birds seemed to sing a little pæan of rejoicing at my good luck; the flowers put forth their sweetest odours as I passed, and I felt myself in ecstasy with the whole creation, and in particular with that segment of it called Con Cregan. And there be folk in this world, would call this egotism and vanity; ay, and by worse names too! As if it was not the very purest philanthropy — as if my self-content did not spring from the calm assurance, that the goods of fortune were bestowed in the right direction, and that the goddess whom men call "fickle," was in reality a most discriminating deity!

There are no two things in creation less alike than a rich man and a poor one! Not only do all their thoughts, feelings, and affections run in opposite channels, but their judgments

are different; and from the habit of presenting particular aspects to the world, they come at last to conform to the impressions conceived of them by the public. The eccentricities of wealth are exalted into fashions — the peculiarities of poverty are degraded to downright vices.

"Oh, glorious metal!" exclaimed I, as I walked along, "that smoothes the roughest road of life, that makes the toughest venison savoury, and renders the rudest associates civil and compliant, what insolence and contumely had I not met with here, in this poor 'Posada,' had I only been what my humble dress and mean exterior denoted! and now, what is there that I cannot exact — what demands can I make, and hear that they are impossible?"

"His Excellency's dinner is served," said the host, as he advanced with many a low and obsequious salutation, to announce my dinner.

I suppose that the cookery of the "Mono" was not of the very highest order, and that if presented before me now, it would meet but sorry acceptance from my more educated palate; but at the time I speak of, it seemed actually delicious. There appeared to arise faint odours of savoury import, from dishes whose garlic would now almost suffocate me, and I luxuriated in the flavour of wine, every glass of which would, at this day, have put my teeth on edge. If my enjoyment was great, however, I took care not to let it appear too palpable; on the contrary, I criticised and condemned, with all the fastidiousness of a spoiled nature, and only condescended to taste anything on the perpetual assurance of the host, that "though very different from what his Excellency was used to, it was exactly to the taste of the late 'Gobernador.'"

I felt all the swelling importance of wealth within me, as I beheld the cringing lacqueys and the obsequious host, who never dared to carry himself erect in my presence — the very meats seemed to send up an incense to my nostrils. The gentle wind that shook the orange blossoms, seemed made to bear its odours to my senses — all Nature appeared tributary to my enjoyment. And, only to think of it! all this adulation

was for poor Con Cregan, the convict's son; the houseless street-runner of Dublin; the cabin-boy of the yacht; the flunkey at Quebec; the penniless wanderer in Texas; the wag of the "Noria," in Mexico; — what a revulsion, and how sudden and unexpected!

It now became a matter of deep consideration within me how I should support this unlooked-for change of condition, without betraying too palpably what the French would call my "antecedents." As to my "relatives," — forgive the poor pun — they gave me little trouble. I had often remarked in life, that vulgar wealth never exhibits itself in a more absurd and odious light, than when indulging in pleasures of which the sole enjoyment is the amount of the cost. The upstart rich man may sit in a gallery of pictures, where Titian, Velasquez, and Vandyck have given him a company, whose very countenances seem to despise him, while he thinks of nothing save the price. If he listen to Malibran, the only sense awakened is the cost of her engagement; and hence that stolid apathy — the lustreless gaze — the unrelieved weariness he exhibits in society, where it is the metal of the "mind" is clinking, and not the metal of the "mint." To a certain extent I did not incur great danger on this head: Nature had done me some kind services; the chief of which was, she had made me an Irishman!

There may seem — alas! there is too great cause that there should seem — something paradoxical in this boast, now, when sorrow and suffering are so much our portion! but I speak only of the individuality which, above every other I have seen or heard of, invests a man with a spirit to enjoy whatever is agreeable in life. Now this same gift is a great safeguard against the vulgarity of purse pride, since the man who launches forth upon the open sea of pleasure is rarely occupied by thoughts of self.

As for me I felt a kind of gluttony for every delight that gold can purchase. What palaces I would inhabit; what equipages I would drive; what magnificent fêtes I would give; what inimitable little dinners, where beauty, wit, and

genius alone should be gathered together; what music should I possess in "my private band;" what exotics in my conservatory; and how I should dispense these fascinations; what happiness would I diffuse in the circle in which I moved, and what a circle would that be! It was to this precise point my buoyant fancy had brought me, as the second flask of champagne, iced almost to a crystal, had warmed me into a glow of imaginative enthusiasm. I fancied myself in a gilded saloon, where, amid the glare of a thousand wax lights, a brilliant company were assembled. I thought that at each opening of the folding door a servant announced some name, illustrious from position, or great in reputation, and that around *me*, as I stood, a group was gathered of all that was distinguished in the world of fashion or celebrity. "Your Royal Highness has made this the proudest day of my life," said I, rising, and bowing reverentially before a faded old arm-chair. "May I offer your Eminence a seat," continued I, to a red sofa-cushion I mistook for a cardinal. "Your Excellency is most heartily welcome," said I, to an empty decanter; and so did I convert every adjunct of the chamber into some distinguished personage, even to my fast-expiring lamp, which, with a glimmering flame, and a nauseous odour, was gradually dying away, and which I actually addressed as a great ambassador!

After this, I conclude that I must have imagined myself in the East; possibly taking a cup of sherbet with the Sultan, or a chibouk with the Khan of Tammerkabund; for when I became conscious once more, I found myself upon the hearth-rug, where I had been enjoying a delicious sleep of some hours.

"Would his Excellency desire to see his chamber?" asked the landlord, as with a branch of candles he stood in the doorway.

I waved my hand in sign of assent, and followed him.

CHAPTER VII.

"Guajuaqualla."

THERE are few things in this world gold cannot buy; but one among their number assuredly is — "a happy dream." Now, although I went to sleep in a great bed with damask hangings, and a gilt crown upon it, my pillow fringed with deep lace, my coverlet of satin edged with gold, I dreamed the whole night through of strifes, combats, and encounters. At one time my enemy would be an Indian; at another, a half-breed; now, a negro; now, a jaguar, or a rattlesnake; but with whom, or whatever the struggle, it was always for money! Nothing else seemed to have any hold upon my thoughts. Wealth, and wealth alone, appeared the guiding principle of my being; and, as the penalty, I was now to learn the ceaseless anxieties, the torturing dreads this passion begets.

With daylight, however, I awoke, and the bright sun streaming in, brought the glorious reality of my happy lot before me, and reminded me of the various duties my high state imposed. My first care was to ascertain the amount and security of my riches; and I resolved to proceed regularly, and in the most businesslike manner in the matter. To this end I ordered my carriage, and proceeded to pay my visit to the banker, Don Xafire.

I had devised and demolished full fifty ingenious narratives of myself, when I drove into the court-yard where the banker resided, and found myself actually without one single satisfactory account of who I was, whence I came, and by what means I became possessed of the formidable papers I carried. "Let circumstances pilot the event" was my old *maxim; and so saying* I entered.

The rattling tramp of my six mules, the cracking of whips, and the crash of the wheels, brought many a head to the windows of the old gaol-like palace when my carriage drove up to the door, and the two out-riders stood in "a salute" at each side while I descended. "Sua Eccelenza El Condé de Cregano" resounded through the arched hall and passages, as an old servant in a tawdry suit of threadbare livery led the way to Don Xafire's private apartment.

After a brief wait in a large but meagrely-furnished chamber, an old man — or a middle-aged one, with a look of age — entered; and, with a profusion of ceremonial, in which he assured me that his house, his wife, his oxen, his mules, his asses, and in fact everything "that was his," stood at my disposal, asked to what fortunate event he owed the honour of my visit.

"I am the representative, Señhor Xafire," said I, "of the great house of Cregan and Company, of which doubtless you have heard; whose ships walk the waters of the icy seas, and lay at anchor amid the perfumes of the spice islands, and whose traffic unites two hemispheres."

"May they always be prosperous," said the polite Spaniard, bowing.

"They have hitherto enjoyed that blessing," responded I, almost thankfully. "Even as the youngest member of the firm, I have nothing to complain of on the score of prosperity." I smiled, took forth a most gorgeous snuff-box, all glittering with brilliants, and presenting it to the Spaniard, laid it carelessly on the table. After a brief pause, to let the splendour settle down into his heart, I proceeded to inform him that in the course of commercial transactions, a vast number of bills, receipts for deposits, and other securities, had fallen into our hands, upon many of which we had advanced large sums, seeing that they bore the name of that most respectable house, the Bank of Don Xafire, of Guajuaqualla. "These would," I added, "have been dispersed through the various channels *of trade, had it* not been the wish of my partners to open *distinct relations* with your house, and consequently they

have retained the papers until a favourable occasion presented itself of personally making the proposition. This happy opportunity has arisen by our recent purchase of the great gold mines of the 'Arguareche' for seventy millions of piastres, of which you may have read in the *Faros de la Habanas.*"

He bowed a humble negative; and I went on to state that our mining operations requiring co-operation and assistance, we desired to open relations with the great house of Don Xafire, whose good fame was well established on the 'Change of Liverpool.

"You spoke of paper-securities and such like, Señhor; may I ask of what nature they are?"

"You shall see them, Don Xafire," said I, opening a very magnificent pocket-book, and presenting first a receipt, dated forty-eight years back, for the sum of twelve thousand piastres in silver, and four bags, weighing two hundred and eighty pounds of gold dust, from the hands of Menelaus Crick, of the mines of Hajoras, near Guajuaqualla. The Spaniard's dark cheek trembled, and a faint tinge of sickly yellow seemed to replace the dusky olive of his tint, as he said, "This is but waste-paper, Señhor, and I trust your excellent house has advanced nothing on its credit."

"On the contrary, Señhor Banquiero," responded I, "we have given the full sum, being much advised thereto by competent counsel."

The battle was now opened, and the combat begun.

It is needless, — I should weary my reader by recapitulating the tissue of inventions, in which, as in a garment, I wrapped myself. I saw quickly, that if *I* was a rogue, so was my antagonist, and that for every stratagem *I* possessed, *he* was equally ready with another. At last, pushed hard by his evasions, equivocations, and subterfuges, I was driven to utter a shadowy kind of menace, in which I artfully contrived to mix the name of the General Santa Anna, — a word, in those days, of more than talismanic power.

"And this reminds me," said I, "that one of my suite who *lost his way, and was taken* prisoner in the Rocky Mountains,

committed to my charge a letter, in which, I fancy, the General is interested." This was a random shot, but it struck the bull's-eye through the very centre. The Señhora Dias's letter was enclosed in an envelope, in which a few words only were written; but these, few as they were, were sufficient to create considerable emotion in Don Xafire, who retired into a window, to read and re-read them.

Another shot, thought I, and he's disabled! "It is needless, then, Don Xafire, to prolong an interview which promises so little. I will therefore take my leave; my next communication will reach you through the General Santa Anna."

"May I not crave a little time for consideration, Señhor," said he, humbly: "these are weighty considerations; there may be other demands still heavier in store for us of the same kind."

"You are right, Señhor; there are other, and still heavier claims, as you very properly opine. Some of them I have here with me; others are in the hands of our house; but all shall be forthcoming, I assure you."

"What may be the gross amount, Señhor?" said the banker, trying, but very ineffectually, to look at his ease.

"Without pretending to minute accuracy, I should guess the sum at something like seven hundred thousand piastres; this, exclusive of certain claims for compensation usual in cases of inquiry. You understand me, I believe." The last menace was a shot in the very centre of his magazine, and so the little usurer felt it, as he fidgeted among his papers, and concealed his face from me.

"Come, Señhor Xafire," said I, with the air of a man who means to deal mercifully, and not to crush the victim in his power; "I will be moderate with you. These bills and receipts shall be all placed in your hands on payment of the sums due, without any demand for interest whatever. We will not speak of the other claims at all. The transaction shall be strictly in honour between us, and nothing shall *ever transpire* to your disadvantage regarding it. Is this *enough?*"

The struggle in the banker's mind was a difficult one, — but after several hours passed in going over the papers, after much discussion, and some altercation, — I gained the day; and when I arose to take my leave, it was with my pocket-book stuffed full of bills, on Pernambuco, Mexico, Santa Cruz, and the Havannah, with letters of credit, bonds, and other securities; the whole amounting to four hundred thousand piastres, — the remaining sum of three hundred thousand, I had agreed to leave in Don Xafire's hands at reasonable interest. In fact, I was but too happy in the possession of so much, to think twice about what became of the remainder.

I presented my friend Xafire with my ruby brooch, as a souvenir: not, indeed, that he needed anything to remind him of our acquaintance; and we parted with all the regrets of brothers about to separate.

"You will stay some days with us here, I hope?" said he, as he conducted me to my carriage.

"I intend a short visit to some of the old 'Placers' in your neighbourhood," replied I, "after which, I mean to return here;" and so with a last embrace, we parted.

My next care was to pay a visit to Don Esteban, for I was burning with anxiety to see Donna Maria once more, and to open my campaign as a rich suitor for her hand. The day chosen for this expedition seemed a fortunate one, for the road, which led through a succession of vineyards, was thronged with townspeople and peasants, in gay holiday dresses; all wending their way in the same direction with ourselves. I asked the reason, and heard that it was the *fête* of the Virgin de los Dolores, whose chapel was on the estate of Don Esteban. I bethought me of the time when I had planned a pilgrimage to that same shrine — little suspecting that I was to make it in my carriage, with six mules and two outriders!

In less than an hour's drive we came in sight of Don Esteban's villa, built on the side of a richly-wooded mountain,

Of the younger ladies, a few condoled with me, praised my heroism and my constancy, and threw out sly hints that when I tried my luck next, fortune might possibly be more generous to me. Don Esteban himself appeared to sympathize sincerely with my sorrow, and evinced the warmest sense of gratitude for the past. Even the Fra tried a little goodnature, but it sat ill upon him, and it was easy to see that he entertained a great mistrust of me.

From the brief experience of what I suffered in these few days, I am decidedly of opinion that rich men are far more impatient under reverses and disappointments than poor ones! It was a marvellous change for one like me, whose earlier years, it is unnecessary to remind the reader, were not passed in the lap of that comfortable wet nurse called "affluence," and yet with all this brilliant present and still more fascinating future, at the very first instance of an opposition to my will, I grew sad, dispirited, and morose. I should have been very angry with myself for my ingratitude, but that I set it all down to the score of love; and so I went about the house, visiting each room where Donna Maria used to sit, reading her books, gazing at her picture, and feeding my mind with a hundred fancies, which the next moment of thought told me were now impossible.

Don Esteban, whose grief for the loss of his daughter was in a manner divided with mine, would not suffer me to leave him, and although the place itself served to keep open the wound of my regret, and the Fra's presence was anything but conciliatory, I passed several days at the villa.

It would have been the greatest relief to me could I have persuaded myself to be candid with Don Esteban, and told him frankly the true story of my life. I felt that all the consolations which he offered me were of no avail, simply because I had misled him! The ingenious tissue of fiction in which I enveloped myself, was a web so thin, that it tore whenever I stirred, and my whole time was spent, as it were, in darning, patching, and piecing the frail garment with *which I covered* my nakedness.

A dozen times every day I jumped up, determined to reveal my humble history; but as regularly did a sentiment of false shame hold me back, and a dread of old Fra Miguel's malicious leer, should he hear the story. Another, — and a strange feeling, too, — influenced me. My imaginary rank, birth, and station, had, from the mere force of repetition, grown to be a portion of myself. I had played the part with such applause before the world, that I could not find in my heart to retire behind the scenes, and resume the humble dress of my real condition.

By way of distracting my gloomy thoughts, I made little excursions in the surrounding country, in one of which I contrived to revisit the "placer," and carry away all the treasure which I had left behind me. This was much more considerable than I had at first believed, the gems being of a size, and beauty, far beyond any I had ever seen before; while the gold, in actual coined money, amounted to a large sum.

Affecting to have changed my original intention of investing a great capital in the mines of Mexico, and resolved instead to return to Europe, I consulted Don Esteban as to the safest hands in which to deposit my money. He named a certain wealthy firm at the Havannah, and gave me a letter of introduction to them, requesting for me all the attention in their power to bestow; and so we parted.

It was with sincere sorrow I shook his hand for the last time; his cordiality was free-hearted and affectionate; and I carry with me, to this hour, the memory of his wise counsels, and honest precepts, as treasures, not the least costly, I brought away with me from the New World.

I arrived safely at the Havannah, travelling in princely state, with two carriages and a great baggage-wagon, guarded by four mounted "carabinieros," who had taken a solemn oath at the shrine of a certain Saint Magalano to eat any bandits who should molest us, — a feat of digestion which I was not sorry their devotion was spared.

The bankers to whom Don Esteban's letters introduced me were most profuse in their offers of attention, and treated me

"Most anxiously did I desire it," said I, shrouding my sorrow under an affectation of important state solicitude.

"What a misfortune," exclaimed he, "that you should have missed him! in all likelihood, had you seen him, he would have agreed to our terms."

"You are right," said I, shaking my head sententiously, and neither guessing nor caring what he alluded to.

"So that he would have accepted the guarantee," exclaimed the banker, with increased excitement.

"He would have accepted the guarantee," echoed I, without the remotest idea of what the words could mean.

"Oh, Madre de Dios! what an unhappy mischance is this! Is it yet too late? Alas, the breeze is freshening, — the sloop is already sinking beyond the horizon; to overtake her would be impossible; and you say that the guarantee would have been accepted?"

"You may rely upon it," said I, the more confidently, as I saw that the ship was far beyond the chance of pursuit.

"What a benefactor to this country you might have been, señhor, had you done us this service!" cried the banker with enthusiasm.

"Well, it is too late to think of it now," said I, rather captiously; for I began to be worried with the mystification.

"Of course, for the present it is too late; but when you arrive in Europe, Señhor Condé, — when you are once more in the land where your natural influence holds sway, may we entertain the hope that you will regard our case with the same favourable eyes?"

"Yes, yes," said I, with impatience, "if I see no reason to change my opinions."

"Upon the subject of the original loan there can be no doubt, Señhor Condé."

"Perhaps not," said I; "but these are questions I must decline entering upon. You will, yourself, perceive that any discussion of them would be inconvenient and indis*creet.*"

The diplomatic reserve of this answer checked the warmth

of his importunity, and he bashfully withdrew, leaving me to the undisturbed consideration of my own thoughts.

I sat till it was already near midnight, gazing on the sea, my eyes still turned to the track by which the vessel had disappeared, and at last rose to retire, when, to my amazement, I perceived my friend, the banker, accompanied by another person, approaching towards me.

"Señhor Condé," said he, in a mysterious whisper; "this is his Excellency the Governor;" and with these words, uttered in all the reverence of awe, he retired, leaving me face to face with a tall dignified-looking personage, whose figure was concealed in the folds of a great cloak.

In all the formal politeness of his rank and country, the Governor begged I would be seated, and took his place beside me. He explained how the banker, one of the richest and most respected men in the Havannah, had informed him of my gracious intentions respecting them, and the sad mishap by which my mediation was foiled. He entered at length into the question of the debt, and all its financial difficulties; which, even had they been far less intricate and complicated, would have puzzled a head which never had the bump arithmetical. How he himself saw his way through the labyrinth I know not, but had the sum been a moderate one, I vow I would rather have paid it myself than investigate it any further; such an inextricable mass of complications, doubles, and difficulties, did it involve.

"Thus, you perceive," said he, at the close of a formidable sum of figures, "that these eighteen millions made no part of the old loan, but were, in fact, the first deposit of what is called the 'Cuba debt;' not that it ever should have had that name, which more properly belonged to the original Poyais three-and-a-hàlf — you understand me?"

"Perfectly — proceed."

"That being the case, our liability is reduced to the sum of twenty-seven millions on the old four-and-a-quarters."

"Clearly so."

"*Now we approach* the difficult part of the matter," said

he, "and I must entreat your most marked attention; for here lies the point which has hitherto proved the stumbling-block in the way of every negotiation."

I promised the strictest attention, and I kept my word till I found myself in a maze of figures, where compound interest and decimal fractions danced a reel together, whose evolutions would have driven Mr. Babbage distracted; while the Governor, now grown "warm in the harness," kept exclaiming at every instant, "Do you see how the 'Ladrones' want to cheat us here? Do you perceive what the Picaros intend by that?"

If I could not follow his arithmetic, I could at least sympathize in his enthusiasm; and I praised the honour of the Mexicans, while I denounced "the cause of roguery" over the face of the globe, to his heart's content.

"You are satisfied about the original debt, Señhor Condé?" — at last, said he, after a "four mile heat" of explanation.

"Most thoroughly," said I, bowing.

"You'd not wish for anything further on that head?"

"Not a syllable."

"And as to the Cuba instalment — you see the way in which the first scrip became entangled in the Chihuahua 'fives,' don't you?"

"Plain as my hand before me."

"Then, of course, you acknowledge our right to the reserve fund?"

"I don't see how it can be disputed," said I.

"And yet that is precisely what the Madrid Government contest!"

"What injustice!" exclaimed I.

"Evident as it is to your enlightened understanding, Señhor Condé, you are, nevertheless, the first man I have ever found to take the right view of this transaction. It is a real pleasure to discuss a state-question with a great man."

Hereupon we both burst forth into an animated duet of

compliments, in which, I am bound to confess, the Governor was the victor.

"And now, Señhor Çondé," said he, after a long volley of panegyric, "may we reckon upon your support in this affair?"

"You must understand, first of all, Excellenza," replied I, "that I am not in any way an official personage. I am," here I smiled with a most fascinating air of mock humility — "I am, so to speak, a humble — a very humble individual, of unpretending rank and small fortune."

"Ah! Señhor Condé," sighed the Governor, for he had heard of my ingots from the banker.

"Being as I say," resumed I, "my influence is naturally small. If I am listened to in a matter of political importance, I owe the courtesy, rather to the memory of my family's services, than to any insignificant merits I may possess. The cause of justice is, however, never weak — no matter how humble the means of him who asserts it. Such as I am, rely upon me."

We embraced here, and the Governor shed a few official tears at the thought of so soon separating from one he regarded as more than his brother.

"We feel, Señhor Condé," said he, "how inadequate any recognition of ours must be for services such as yours. We are a young country and a Republic; honours we have none to bestow — wealth is already your own — we have nothing to offer, therefore, but our gratitude."

"Be it so!" thought I, "the burthen will not increase my luggage."

"This box will remind you, however, of an interview, and recall one who deems this the happiest, as it is the proudest hour of his life;" here he presented me with a splendid gold snuff box, containing a miniature of the President surrounded by enormous diamonds.

Resolving not to be outdone in generosity, and at least, *not to be guilty of* dishonesty before my own conscience, I

insisted upon the Governor's acceptance of my watch — a very costly repeater studded with precious stones.

"The arms of my family — the Cregans are Irish — will bring me to your recollection," said I, pointing to a very magnificent heraldic display on the timepiece, wherein figured the ancient crown of Ireland, over a shield, in one compartment of which was an "eye winking," the motto being the Gaelic word, "Nabocklish," signifying "May be not," ironically.

I will not dwell upon the other particulars of an interview which lasted till nigh morning. It will be sufficient to mention that I was presented with letters of introduction and recommendation, to the Mexican Ministers at Paris and Madrid, instructing them to show me every attention, and desiring them to extend to me their entire confidence, particularly to furnish me with introductions to any official personages with whom I desired to be acquainted. This was all that I wanted — for I was immensely rich, and only needed permission to pass the door of the "great world," to mingle in that society for which my heart yearned and longed unceasingly.

Some of my readers will smile at the simplicity which believed these passports necessary, and was ignorant that wealth alone is wanting to attain any position, to frequent any society, to be the intimate of any set in Europe, and that the rich man is other than he was in classic days, — "Honoratus, pulcher, rex denique regum."

I have lived to be wiser, and to see vulgarity, coarseness, meanness, knavery, nay even convicted guilt, the favoured guests of royal saloons. The moral indictments against crime have to the full as many flaws as the legal ones; and we see, in every society, men, and women too, as notoriously criminal as though they wore the red-and-yellow livery of the galleys. Physicians tell us that every drug whose sanitary properties is acknowledged in medicine, contains some ingredients of a noxious or poisonous nature. May not something similar exist in the moral world? and even in the very healthiest mixtures, may not some "bitter principle" be found to lurk?

CHAPTER VIII.

"The Voyage of the 'Acadie.'"

I was not sorry to leave the Havannah on the following day. I did not desire another interview with my "friend" the Governor, but rather felt impatient to escape a repetition of his arithmetic, and the story of the "original debt."

Desirous of supporting my character as a great personage, and, at the same time, to secure for myself the pleasure of being unmolested during the voyage, I obtained the sole right to the entire cabin accommodation of the "Acadie" for myself and suite, — my equipages, baggage, and some eight or ten Mexican horses occupying the deck.

A salute of honour was fired, as I ascended the ladder, and replied to by the forts — a recognition of my dignity at which I took occasion to seem offended, assuring the captain that I was travelling in the strictest incognito; leaving it to his powers of calculation to compute what amount of retinue and followers I should have, when journeying in the full blaze of acknowledged identity.

I sat upon the poop-deck as they weighed the anchor, contrasting in my mind my present condition with that of my first marine experiences on board the *Firefly*. I am richer, thought I. Am I better? Have I become more generous, more truthful, more considerate, more forgiving?

Has my knowledge of the world developed more of good in me, or of evil? Have my own successes ministered, rather to my self-esteem than to my gratefulness; and have I learned to think meanly of all who have been beaten in the race of fortune? Alas! there was not a count of this indictment to which I dared plead "Not guilty." I had seen knavery thrive *too often, not* to feel a kind of respect for its ability; I saw

honesty too often worsted, not to feel something like contempt for its meekness. It was difficult to feel a reverence for poverty, whose traits were frequently ridiculous; and it was hard to censure wealth, which dispensed its abundance in splendid hospitalities. Oh, the cunning sophistries by which we cover up our real feelings in this life, smothering every healthy impulse, and every generous aspiration, under the guise of some "conventionality."

My conscience was less lenient than I expected. I cut but a sorry figure "in the dock," and was obliged to throw myself upon the mercy of the court. I will be more considerate in future, said I to myself; I will be less exacting with my servants, and more forgiving to their delinquencies; I will try and remember that there is an acid property in poverty that sours even the sweetest "milk of human kindness;" I will be trustful, too — a "gentleman" ought not to be suspicious; it is eminently becoming in a Bow-street officer, but suits not the atmosphere of good society. These excellent resolutions were, to a certain extent, "apropos;" for just as "the foresail began to draw" a boat came alongside and hailed the ship. I did not deign any attention to a circumstance so trivial to "one of my condition," and never noticed the conversation which in very animated tones was kept up between the captain and the stranger, until the former, approaching me with the most profound humility, and asking forgiveness for the great liberty he was about to take, said that a gentleman, whom urgent business recalled to Europe, humbly entreated permission to take his passage on board the "Acadie."

"Are you not aware it is impossible, my good friend?" said I, listlessly; "the accommodation is lamentably restricted as it is; my secretary's cabin is like a dog-kennel, and my second cook has actually to lie round a corner, like a snake."

The captain reddened, and bit his lip in silence.

"*As for myself*," said I, heroically, "I never complain. *Let me have any* little cabin for my bed, a small bath-room

a place to lounge in during the day, with a few easy sofas, and a snug crib for a dinner-room, and I can always rough it. It was part of my father's system never to make Sybarites of his boys." This I asserted with all the sturdy vehemence of truth.

"We will do everything to make your Excellency comfortable," said the captain, who clearly could not see the reasons for my self-praise; "and as to the Consul — what shall we say to him?"

"Consul, did you say?" said I.

"Yes, Señhor Condé, he is the French Consul for the Republic of 'Campecho.'" That this was a state I had never heard of before, was quite true; yet it was clearly one which the French Government were better informed upon, and deigned to recognise by an official agent.

"Hold on there a bit!" shouted out the captain to the boat's crew. "What shall I say, Señhor Condé? The Chevalier de la Boutonerie is very anxious on the subject."

"Let this man have his passage," said I, indolently, and lighted a cigar, as if to turn my thoughts in another direction, not even noticing the new arrival, who was hoisted up the side with his portmanteau in a very undignified fashion for an official character. He soon, however, baffled this indifference on my part, by advancing towards me, and in a manner where considerable ease and tact were evident thanked me for my polite consideration regarding him, and expressed a hope that he might not in any way inconvenience me during the voyage.

Now, the chevalier was not in himself a very prepossessing personage, while his dress was of the very shabbiest, being a worn-out suit of black, covered by a coarse brown Mexican mantle; and yet his fluency, his quiet assurance, his seeming self-satisfaction, gained an ascendancy over me at once. I saw that he was a master in a walk in which I myself had so *long been a student*, and that he was a consummate adept in *the "art of impudence."*

And how mistaken is the world at large in the meaning of that art! How prone to call the unblushing effrontery of every underbred man, impudence! — the rudeness that dares any speech, or adventures upon any familiarity — the soulless, heartless, selfish intrusiveness that scruples not to invade any society. These are not impudence, or they are such specimens of the quality as men only possess in common with inferior animals. I speak of that educated, cultivated "impudence," which, never abashed by an inferiority — felt acutely — is resolved to overbear worldly prejudices by the exercise of gifts that assert a mastery over others; — a power of rising, by the expansive force of self-esteem, into something almost estimable — ordinary mortals tell lies at intervals, "*per saltum*," as the doctors say; but these people's whole life is a lie. The chevalier was a fine specimen of the class, and seemed as indifferent to a hundred little adverse circumstances as though everything around him went well and pleasantly.

There was a suave dignity in the way he moved a very dubious hand over his unshaven chin — in the graceful negligence he exhibited when disposing the folds of his threadbare cloak — in the jaunty lightness with which, after saluting, he replaced his miserable hat on the favoured side of his head, that conveyed the whole story of the man.

What a model for my imitation had he been, thought I, if I had seen him in the outset of life! what a study he had presented! and yet there he was, evidently in needy circumstances, pressed on by even urgent want, and I, Con Cregan, the outcast — the poor friendless street-ruined — had become a "millionaire."

I don't know how it was, but certainly I felt marvellously ill at ease with my new friend. A real aristocrat, with all the airs of assumption and haughtiness, would have been a blessing compared with the submissive softness of the "chevalier." *Through all his* flattery there seemed a sly consciousness that *his honeyed* words were a snare, and his smile a delusion;

and I could never divest myself of the feeling that he saw into the very secret of my heart, and knew me thoroughly.

I must become his dupe, thought I, or it is all over with me. The fellow will detect me for a "parvenu" long before we reach Malaga!

No man, born and bred to affluence, could have acquired the keen insight into life that I possessed. I must mask this knowledge, then, if I would still be thought a "born gentleman." This was a wise resolve; at least, its effects were immediately such as I hoped for. The chevalier's little sly sarcasms, his half-insinuated "equivoques," were changed for a tone of wonder and admiration for all I said. How one so young could have seen and learned so much! — what natural gifts I must possess!— how remarkably just my views were! — how striking the force of my observations! — and all this, while I was discoursing what certainly does not usually pass for "consummate wisdom." I soon saw that the chevalier set me down for a fool; and from that moment we changed places — *he* became the dupe versus *me*. To be sure, the contrivance cost me something, as we usually spent the evenings at picquet or écarté, and the consul was the luckiest of men; to use his own phrase, applied to one he once spoke of — "savait corriger la fortune."

Although he spoke freely of the fashionable world of Paris and London, with all whose celebrities he affected a near intimacy, he rarely touched upon his New World experiences, and blinked all allusion whatever to the republic of "Campecho." His own history was comprised in the brief fact that he was the cadet of a great family of Provence. — All your French rogues I remark come from the south of France. — That he had once held a high diplomatic rank, from which, in consequence of the fall of a ministry, he was degraded, and, after many vicissitudes of fortune, he had become Consul-General at Campecho. "My friends," continued he, "are *now looking up* again in the world, so that I entertain *hopes of something* better than perpetual banishment."

Of English people, their habits, modes of life, and thought, the chevalier spoke to me with a freedom he never would have used if he had not believed me to be a Spaniard, and only connected with Ireland through the remote chain of ancestry. This deceit of mine was one he never penetrated, and I often thought over the fact with satisfaction. To encourage his frankness on the subject of my country, I affected to know nothing, or next to nothing, of England; and gradually he grew to be more communicative, and at last spoke with an unguarded freedom which soon opened to me a clue of his real history.

It was one day as we walked the deck together, that, after discussing the tastes and pursuits of the wealthy English, he began to talk of their passion for sport, and especially horse-racing. The character of this national pastime he appeared to understand perfectly, not as a mere foreigner who had witnessed a Derby or a Doncaster, but as one conversant with the traditions of the turf or the private life of the jockey and the trainer.

I saw that he coloured all his descriptions with a tint meant to excite an interest within me for these sports. He drew a picture of an "Ascot meeting," wherein were assembled all the ingredients that could excite the curiosity and gratify the ambition of a wealthy, high-spirited youth; and he dilated with enthusiasm upon his own first impressions of these scenes, mingled with half-regrets of how many of his once friends had quitted the "Turf" since he last saw it!

He spoke familiarly of those whose names I had often read in newspapers as the great leaders of the "sporting world," and affected to have known them all on terms of intimacy and friendship. Even had the theme been less attractive to me, I would have encouraged it for other reasons, a strange glimmering suspicion ever haunting my mind that I had heard of the worthy chevalier before, and under another title; and *so completely* had this idea gained possession of me, that I *could think of* nothing else.

At length, after we had been some weeks at sea, the welcome cry of "Land!" was given from the mast-head; but as the weather was hazy and thick, we were compelled to shorten sail, and made comparatively little way through the water; so that at nightfall we saw that another day must elapse ere we touched mother earth again.

The chevalier and the captain both dined with me; the latter, however, soon repaired to the deck, leaving us in "*tête-à-tête*." It was in all likelihood the last evening we should ever pass together, and I felt a most eager longing to ascertain the truth of my vague suspicions. Chance gave me the opportunity. We had been playing cards, and luck — contrary to custom, and in part owing to my always shuffling the cards *after* my adversary — had deserted *him* and taken *my* side. At first this seemed to amuse him, and he merely complimented me upon my fortune, and smiled blandly at my success. After a while, however, his continued losses began to irritate him, and I could see that his habitual command of temper was yielding to a peevish, captious spirit he had never exhibited previously.

"Shall we double our stake?" said he, after a long run of ill-luck.

"If *you* prefer it, of course," said I. And we played on, but ever with the same result.

"Come," cried he, at last, "I'll wager fifty Napoleons on this game." The bet was made, and he lost it! With the like fortune he played on and on, till at last, as day was dawning, he had not only lost all that he had won from me during the voyage, but a considerable sum besides, and for which he gave me his check upon a well-known banker at Paris.

"Shall I tell you your fortune, Monsieur le Comte?" said he, in a tone of bitterness that almost startled me.

"With all my heart," said I, laughing; "are you skilful as a necromancer?"

"*I can at least decipher* what the cards indicate," said he. "*There is no great skill* in reading, where the print is legible."

With these words he shuffled the cards, dividing them into two or three packets, the first card of each he turned on the face. "Let me premise, Count," said he, "before I begin, that you will not take anything in bad part which I may reveal to you, otherwise I'll be silent. You are free to believe, or not to believe, what I tell you, — but you cannot reasonably be angry if unpleasant discoveries await you."

"Go on fearlessly," said I; "I'll not promise implicit faith in everything, but I'll pledge myself to keep my temper."

He began at once, drawing forth every third card of each heap, and disposing them in a circle, side by side. When they were so arranged, he bent over, as if to study them, concealing his eyes from me by his hand, — but at the same time, as I could perceive, keenly watching my face between his fingers. "There is some great mistake here," said he at length, in a voice of irritation. "I have drawn the cards wrong, somehow; it must be so, since the interpretation is clear as print. What an absurd blunder, too!" and he seemed as if about to dash the cards up in a heap, from a sense of angry disappointment.

"Nay, nay," cried I, interposing. "Let us hear what they say, even though we may dispute the testimony."

"If it were less ridiculous it might be offensive," said he, smiling; "but being as it is, it is really good laughing-matter."

"I am quite impatient, — pray read on."

"Of course it is too absurd for anything but ridicule," said he, smiling, but, as I thought, with a most malicious expression. "You perceive here, this four of clubs, which, as the first card we turn, assumes to indicate your commencement in life. Now, only fancy, Monsieur le Comte, what this most insolent little demon would insinuate? Really, I cannot continue. Well, well — be it so. This card would say, that *you were not only* born without rank or title, but actually in *a condition of the* very meanest, and most humble poverty.

Isn't that excellent?" said he, bursting out into a fit of immoderate laughter, in which the spiteful glance of his keen eyes seemed to pierce through and through me.

As for me, I laughed too; but what a laugh it was! Never was a burst of natural sorrow so poignant in suffering as that forced laugh, when, covered with shame, I sat there, beneath the sarcastic insolence of the wretch who seemed to gloat over tortures he was inflicting.

"I can scarcely expect that this opening will inspire you with much confidence in the oracle," said he; "the first step a falsehood, promises ill for the remainder of the journey."

"If not very veracious," said I, "it is at least very amusing. Pray continue."

"What would the old counts of your ancestry have said to such a profanation?" cried the chevalier. "By St. Denis, I would not have been the man to asperse their blood thus, in their old halls at Grenada!"

"*We* live in a less haughty age," said I, affecting a smile of indifference, and motioning to him to proceed.

"What follows is the very commonest of that nonsense which is revealed in all lowly fortunes. You are, as usual, the victim of cold and hunger, suffering from destitution and want. Then, there are indications of a bold spirit, ambitious and energetic, bursting out through all the gloom of your dark condition, and a small whispered word in your ear, tells you to hope!" While the chevalier rattled out this "rodomontade" at a much greater length than I have time or patience to repeat, his eyes never quitted me, but seemed to sparkle with a fiend-like intelligence of what was passing within me. As he concluded, he mixed up the cards together, merely muttering, half-aloud, "adventures and escapes by land and sea." "Abundance of hard luck, to be all compensated for one day, when wealth in all its richest profusion is showered upon you." Then, dashing the cards from him in affected anger, he said, "It is enough to make men despise themselves, the way in which they yield credence to such *rank tomfoolery!* but I assure you, Count, however con-

temptible the oracle has shown herself to-day, I have on more than one occasion been present at the most startling revelations, — not alone as regarded the past, but the future also."

"I can easily believe it, Chevalier," replied I, with a great effort to seem philosophically calm. "One must not reject everything that has not the stamp of reason upon it; and even what I have listened to to-day, absurd as it is, has not shaken my faith in the divination of the cards. Perhaps this fancy of mine is the remnant of a childish superstition, which I owe in great part to my old nurse. She was a Moor by birth, and imbued with all the traditions and superstitions of her own romantic land."

There was a most sneering expression on the chevalier's face as I uttered these words. I paid no attention to it, however, but went on: "From the venerable dame I myself attained to some knowledge of 'destiny reading,' of which I remember once or twice in life to have afforded very singular proofs. *My* skill, however, usually preferred unravelling the 'future' to the 'present.'"

"Speculation is alway easier than recital," said the chevalier, drily.

"Very true," said I; "and in reading the past I have ever found how want of sufficient skill has prevented my giving to the great fact of a story the due and necessary connexion; so that, indeed, I appear as if distinct events alone were revealed to me, without clue to what preceded or followed them. I see destiny as a traveller sees a landscape, by fitful flashes of lightning at night, great tracts of country suddenly displayed in all the blaze of noon-day, but lost to sight the next moment for ever! Such humble powers as these, are, I am well aware, unworthy to bear competition with your more cultivated gifts; but if, with all their imperfections, you are disposed to accept their exercise, they are sincerely at your service."

The chevalier, I suspect, acceded to this proposal in the *belief that it was* an effort on my part to turn the topic from

myself to *him*, for he neither seemed to believe in my skill, nor feel any interest in its exercise.

Affecting to follow implicitly the old Moorish woman's precepts, I prepared myself for my task by putting on a great mantle with a hood, which, when drawn forward, effectually concealed the wearer's face. This was a precaution I took the better to study his face, while my own remained hid from view.

"You are certainly far more imposing as a prophet than I can pretend to be," said he, laughing, as he lighted a cigar, and lay back indolently to await my revelations. I made a great display of knowledge in shuffling and arranging the cards, the better to think over what I was about; and at last, disposing some dozen in certain mystic positions before me, I began.

"You startled *me*, Chevalier, by a discovery which only wanted truth to make it very remarkable. Let me now repay *you* by another which I shrewdly suspect to be in the same condition. There are four cards now before me, whose meaning is most positive, and which distinctly assert that you, Chevalier de la Boutonerie, are no chevalier at all!"

"This is capital," said he, filling out a glass of wine and drinking it off with the most consummate coolness.

"And here," said I, not heeding his affected ease; "here is another still stranger revelation, which says that you are not a Frenchman, but a native of a land which latterly has taken upon it to supply the rest of the world with adventurers — in plain words, a Pole."

"It is true that my father, who held a command in the Imperial army, lived some years in that country," said he, hastily; "but I have yet to learn that he forfeited his nationality by so doing."

"I only know what the cards tell me," said I, spreading out a mass of them before me, and pretending to study them attentively; "and here is a complication which would need a cleverer expositor than I am. Of all the tangled webs ever I *assayed to unravel*, this is the knottiest. Why really, Che-

valier, yours must have been a life of more than ordinary vicissitude, or else my prophetic skill has suffered sadly from disuse."

"Judging from what you have just told me, I rather lean to the latter explanation," said he, swallowing down two glasses of wine with great rapidity.

"I suspect such to be the case, indeed," said I, "for otherwise I could scarcely have such difficulty in reading these mystic signs once so familiar to me, and from which I can now only pick up a stray phrase here and there. Thus I see what implies a high diplomatic employment, and yet, immediately after, I perceive that this is either a mistake of mine, or the thing itself a cheat and a deception."

"It surely does not require divination to tell a diplomatic agent that he has served on a foreign mission," said the chevalier with a sneer.

"Perhaps not, but I see here vestiges of strange occurrences in which this fact is concerned. A fleeting picture passes now before my eyes: I see a race-course, with its crowds of people, and its throng of carriages, and the horses are led out to be saddled, and all is expectation and eagerness, and — what! This is most singular! the vision has passed away, and I am looking at two figures who stand side by side in a richly-furnished room, a man and a woman. *She* is weeping, and *he* consoling her. Stay! He lifts his head — the man is yourself, Chevalier!"

"Indeed!" said he; but this time the word was uttered in a faint voice, while a pallor, that was almost lividness, coloured his dark features.

"She murmurs a name; I almost caught it," exclaimed I, as if carried away by the rapt excitement of prophecy. "Yes! I hear it now, perfectly; — the name is Alexis!"

A fearful oath burst from the chevalier' and with a bound he sprung to his feet, and dashed his closed fists against his brow. "*Away* with your jugglery, — have done with your *miserable cheat*, sir, — that can only terrify women and

children. Speak out like a man; — who are you, and what are you?"

"What means this outrage, sir? How have you forgotten yourself so far as to *use* this language to *me?*" said I, throwing back the mantle and standing full before him.

"Let us have no more acting, sir, whether it be as prophet or bully," said he, sternly. "You affect to know *me*, who I am, and whence I have come. Make the game equal between us, or it may be worse for you."

"You threaten me, then," said I, calmly.

"I do," was the answer.

"It is therefore open war between us?"

"I never said so," replied he with a most cutting irony of manner; "but whatever secret malice can do — and you shall soon know what it means — I pledge myself you will not find yourself forgotten."

"Agreed then; now leave me, sir."

"I am your guest, sir," said he, with a most hypocritical air of deference and courtesy. "It is surely scant politeness to drive me hence when I am not in a position to find another shelter; we are upon the high seas; I cannot walk forth and take my leave. Believe me, sir, the character you would fain perform before the world would not act so."

Notwithstanding the insult conveyed in the last words, I determined that I would respect "him who had eaten my salt," and with a gesture of assent, for I could not speak, I moved away.

No sooner was I alone, than I repented me of the rash folly into which, for the indulgence of a mere petty vengeance, I had been betrayed. I saw that by this absurd piece of malice, I had made an enemy of a man whose whole career vouched for the danger of his malevolence.

How could he injure me? What species of attack could he make upon me? Whether was it more likely that he would avoid me as one dangerous to himself, or pursue me wherever I went by his vengeance? These were hard questions to solve, and *they filled my mind* so completely, that I neither heeded

the bustle which heralded the arrival on board of the pilot, or the still busier movement which told that we were approaching the harbour. At last I went on deck and approached the bulwark, over which a number of the crew were leaning, watching the course of a boat, that, with all her canvas spread, was making for land. "The pilot-boat," said the captain, in reply to my glance of inquiry; "she is lying straight in, as the consul is anxious to land at once."

"Is he on board of her?" said I, with an anxiety I could not conceal.

"Yes, Señhor Condé, and your Excellency's secretary too."

Was it my fear suggested the notion, or was it the simple fact, but I thought that the words "Count" and "Excellency" were articulated with something like a sneer? I had no opportunity to put the matter to the test, for the captain had already quitted the spot, and was busy with the multifarious cares the near approach to land enforces. My next thought was, Why had my secretary gone ashore without my orders? Was this a piece of zeal on his part to make preparations for our disembarking, or might it be something worse? and if so, what? Every moment increased the trouble of my thoughts. Certainly misfortunes do cast their shadows before them, for I felt that strange and overwhelming sense of depression that never is causeless. I ran over every species of casualty that I could imagine, but except highway robbery, actual "brigandage," I could not fancy any real positive danger to be anticipated from the chevalier.

How different was my mood from what I expected it would have been on nearing shore? Where were all my visions of pomp and splendour? Where the proud circumstances of my more than princely state? Alas, I would have given a full fourth of my wealth to be landed unostentatiously and quietly, and to have my mind relieved from all dread of the cursed chevalier!

That I did not overrate the peril before me, events soon *proved.*

CHAPTER IX.

The "Carcel Morena" at Malaga.

As we sailed proudly into the harbour of Malaga, my attention, at first directed to the striking features of the shcre, where lay a city actually embowered amid orange groves — was soon drawn off by the appearance of a boat, rowed by twelve men, which approached the ship. The national flag of Spain floated from a standard in her stern, and I could mark the glitter of arms and uniform, on board of her.

"The officers of health, I suppose?" said I, carelessly, to the captain; "No, Señhor, these are soldiers of the garrison."

"Ah! I understand," said I, "they are on the alert as to whom they land in these troublous times;" for it was the period of the great Carlist struggle.

"Possibly," was his dry remark; and he moved away.

A hoarse challenge from the boat, was answered by something from the ship; and the "accommodation-ladder" was immediately lowered, and an officer ascended to the deck, followed by two of his men, with their side-arms.

Some of the ordinary greetings being interchanged between the captain and the officer, the latter said, "My business here is with the person styling himself the Condé de Cregano. Where is he?"

"That is my name, Señhor," said I, with a studious admixture of civility and condescension.

"Please to walk this way, sir," said the officer, leading towards the poop cabin, and preceding me with a degree of assurance, *that* boded ill for his impression of my *dignity.*

As we entered the cabin, I could hear the two soldiers taking up their places as sentries at the door.

"I wish to see your passport, Señhor," said he, as he seated himself at the table.

"My passport shall be produced at the fitting time," said I, "when I arrive on shore. Here I have no need of any."

"You are wrong, sir: once within that circle of buoys, at the mouth of the port, you are within the limits of the shore authorities; but were it even otherwise, these are not the times for scruples, and I, for one, would not hesitate to arrest you on the information I have received."

"Information you have received, sir!" exclaimed I, in terror and amazement.

"Yes, sir; I may as well tell you that Malaga is not in the possession of your friends — you will not find a Carlist garrison ready to give you a salute of honour at your landing. Far less formal, but not less peremptory attentions await you; but produce your papers, for I have no time to lose."

I saw at a glance that my position was most perilous, and as rapidly resolved to make an effort for safety. "Señhor Capitana," said I, placing an open pocket-book stuffed with bank-notes before him; "please to accept my passport, and to keep it in your own safe possession. I shall put to sea again, and order the captain to land me at some port in Italy."

"It is too late," said he, with a sigh, as he pushed the pocket-book away; "the informations against you are already transmitted to Madrid."

"Great heavens! and for whom do they take me?" cried I.

"I cannot tell. — I never heard. I only know that I have the order for your arrest as the person assuming to be 'the Condé Cregano.'"

"*What crime is* laid to my charge? — have I defrauded *any one? What is* alleged against me?"

"Show me your passport," said he again.

"There it is," said I, producing the document which by Don Esteban's intervention I had obtained from the authorities of Guajuaqualla, and wherein I was called a native of Grenada, and a noble of Spain.

"And all this is true as set forth?" said the officer.

"It is a principle of law in my native land, that no prisoner is called upon to criminate himself," said I.

"In that case you are no Spaniard," said the officer, shrewdly, "nor, indeed, does your accent so bespeak you. You are now under arrest." He opened the door as he said this, and pointing me out to the two sentries, whispered something too low for me to overhear. This done, he left the cabin and went upon deck.

I looked up from the chair where I sat, into the faces of my two guardians, and a more ill-favoured pair of gentlemen I never beheld. Ill-fed but dissipated-looking rascals, they seemed more like highwaymen than soldiers. Still, even a chance was not to be thrown away, and so I whispered in a soft voice, — "My worthy friends, in that writing-case yonder there are bank-notes to a very large amount. In a few moments they will be taken away from me, never to be restored. I may as well have the satisfaction of knowing that two brave, but poor men, are benefited by them. Bring me the desk, and I'll give them to you." They looked at each other and they looked at me: they then looked towards the door and the skylight, and although without speaking, it was plain enough to see what was passing in their minds.

"Remember," said I, "I ask nothing in return from you — shall not attempt to escape; nor were I to do so, could you aid me in any way. I merely wish to assist two worthy fellows, who certainly do not look like the 'spoiled children of fortune.'"

They hesitated, and seemed afraid; at last they whispered for a few seconds together; and then one of them went over, and *taking up the desk*, laid it down before me. "You can *make a fair division* at another time," said I; it is better not

to waste precious moments now, but at once conceal the money about your persons. Here are some eight or ten thousand piastres, — and here, fully as much more for you. These are Mexican notes for a large sum, and these are bills on Amsterdam and Hamburgh for great amounts. That's right, my lads, make short work of it — in your boots, in your shakos — anywhere for the present, only be quiet!"

Truly they merited all my encomiums! to "stow away" plunder I'd back them against any pair who ever stopped a diligence on the high-road; nor was it without some little difficulty I could persuade them to leave any money in the desk, as a precaution to prevent the suspicion of what had actually occurred. As I aided them in the work of concealment, I artfully contrived to possess myself of one paper — the Havannah banker's receipt for the large deposits I had left in his hands, and this I managed to slip within the lining of my travelling cap. It was a last anchor of hope, if ever I were to weather the storm around me!

Our work had scarcely been completed, and the desk replaced in its former situation, when the officer returned. He briefly informed me that seals had been placed on all my effects, that my household was placed under an arrest similar to my own, and that when I had pointed out the various articles of my property in the cabin, there was nothing more for me to do, but to accompany him on shore.

As I was not suffered to take any portion of my baggage with me, even of my clothes, I was soon in the boat and pulling rapidly for the land. The quays and the jetty were crowded with people whose curiosity I at once perceived had no other object than myself, and although some did not scruple to exhibit towards me signs of dislike and dissatisfaction, I could remark that others regarded me with a compassionate, and even a kindly look. All were, however, scrupulously silent and respectful, and touched their hats in salutation, as I ascended the stairs of the landing-place.

This feeling, to my considerable astonishment, I perceived *extended even to* the soldiery, one or two of whom saluted as

I passed. In any case, thought I, it is for no insignificant offender I am taken; and even that is some comfort, provided my crime be not high treason.

I was conducted straight to the "Carcel Morena," a large sombre-looking building, which was at once fortress, prison, and residence of the Governor, exhibiting a curious mixture of these incongruous functions in all its details.

The apartment into which I was ushered was a large saloon, dimly lighted by narrow windows piercing the thick walls. The furniture had once been handsome, but from time and neglect had become worn and disfigured. A small table, spread with a very tolerable breakfast, stood in one of the windows, at which I was invited to seat myself, and then I was left alone to my own lucubrations. Hunger prevailed over grief, I ate heartily; and having concluded my meal, amused myself by studying the Trojan war, which was displayed upon the walls in a very ancient tapestry.

I had traced the fortunes of Greeks and Trojans on the walls till I was wellnigh wearied. I had even gazed upon the little patches of brown grass beneath the windows, till my eyes grew dim with watching, but no one came to look after me, and, in the unbroken silence around, I half feared that I should be utterly forgotten, and left, like the old tapestry, to die of moths and years; but at last, as day was declining, I heard something like the clank of arms and the tramp of soldiery, and soon the sounds were more distinctly marked, approaching my door. Suddenly the two leaves of the folding door were thrown wide, and an elderly man, in a general's uniform, followed by two other officers, entered.

Without taking any notice of the salute I made him, he walked towards the fire-place, and, standing with his back to it, said to one of his aid-de-camps, "Read the 'proces verbal,' José."

José bowed, and taking from his sabretache a very lengthy roll of paper, began to read aloud, but with such rapidity and *such indistinctness* withal, that I could only, and with the

greatest difficulty, catch a stray word here and there. The titles of her Majesty the Queen appeared to occupy full ten minutes, and an equal time to be passed in setting forth the authority under whose jurisdiction I then stood. These over, there came something about an individual who, born a Mexican, or a native of Texas, had assumed the style, title, and dignity of a Count of Spain; such rank being taken for purposes of deception, and the better to effect certain treasonable designs, to be set forth hereafter. After this there came a flourish about the duties of loyalty and fidelity to the sovereign, whose private virtues came in by parenthesis, together with a very energetic denunciation on all base and wicked men, who sought to carry dissension into the bosom of their country, and convulse with the passions of a civil war, a nation proverbially tranquil and peace-loving.

Nothing could be less interesting than the style of this paper, except the manner of him who recited it. State truisms, in inflated language, and wearisome platitudes about nothing, received no additional grace from a snuffling nasal intonation and a short cough.

I listened at first with the anxiety of a man whose fortunes hung on the issue, then, as the vague rambling character of the document diminished this interest, I heard with more indifference; and lastly, completely wearied by the monotony of the voice, and the tiresome iterations of the style, I could not prevent my thoughts from wandering far from the affair in hand.

What fearful crimes were alleged against me — what dire offences I was charged with — I was not to hear, since, lost in the pleasant land of day-dreams, I fancied myself strolling in the shade of a forest, with Donna Maria beside me, while I poured out a most impassioned narrative of my love and fidelity. Nor was it till the reading was concluded, and a loud Hem! from the General resounded through the chamber, that I remembered where I was.

"Prisoner!" said he, in a stern, authoritative tone, "you *have now heard* the nature of the charge against you, and the

reasons of your arrest; you will answer certain questions, the replies to which, if not in accordance with truth, constitute the crime of 'Traicion,' the penalty being death. What is your name?"

"Con Cregan."

"Native of what country?"

"Ireland."

"What rank and position do you hold in society?"

"A variable one — as luck favours me."

"What trade or profession do you follow?"

"Whatever seems most convenient at the moment."

"Have you served?"

"I have."

"In the land or sea service?"

"In both."

"With what grade?"

"Nothing very distinguished."

"Have you ever held the command of an expedition?"

"I have."

"With what object, and where?"

"In the prairies of South America, to shoot red deer."

"Remember, sir," said the general, "this is no occasion for untimely jest; these sallies may cost you more dearly than you think for."

"If I am to speak the truth," said I, boldly, "I must answer as I have done. If you want fiction, I'm ready for you at a moment's notice."

"Make a note of that, José! — 'says that he is perfectly indifferent whether he tells truth or falsehood.'"

"And add, by way of parenthesis," said I, "that the General is precisely of my own way of thinking."

"Write down, 'insults the commission,'" said the General, boiling with rage.

The paragraph seemed a full one, for the interrogating was not resumed for some minutes.

"Now, sir," resumed the General, "state your object coming to the country."

"To get out of it as fast as I could."

"For whose use were the arms provided — the horses, a horse equipage with which you embarked?"

"My own."

"Name the agent or agents of Don Carlos with whom y have held correspondence?"

"None. I never knew any."

"By whose hands were the large sums of money in yc possession entrusted to you?"

"I found them."

"How, and where?"

"In a hole."

The General's face grew purple; and more than onc could see the struggle it cost him to repress his bursting dignation. And, in the mutterings he let fall to his secreta it was easy to mark that his comments on the evidence w not too favourable.

"Were you acquainted with Brigadier Hermose G zillos?"

"No."

"Nor with his brother, the Canon Gonzillos?"

"No."

"When did you first meet Señhor Ruy Peres Y' Hacho?

"Never saw him in my life."

"Nor held intercourse with him?"

"Never."

"Were not much in his company, nor entrusted to him secret details of the expedition?"

"I know nothing of what you're talking about."

"Produce Ruy Peres," said the General, and the d opened, and the chevalier, dressed in a military uniform, a with several decorations of foreign orders, entered.

"*Do you know* this gentleman?" said the General, drily

"I know him for a Pole, whose name is Alexis Radchoffsky; at least, under such a name he once lived in London, and is well known to the police there."

"Go on," said the General to the secretary. "On being confronted with the Señhor Ruy Peres, the prisoner became suddenly abashed, and at once confessed that he had known him intimately several years before at London."

"Is that man a witness against me?" asked I, eagerly.

"Attend to me, sir," said the General, while he made a sign to the Chevalier to retire; "neither subterfuge nor insolence will avail you here. You are perfectly well known to us; your early history — your late intrigues — your present intentions."

"With such intimate knowledge of all about me, General," said I, coolly, "haven't we been wasting a great deal of valuable time in this interrogatory?"

"And, notwithstanding repeated admonitions, persisted in using the most indecorous language to the commission." These words the General dictated in a loud voice, and they were immediately taken down by his secretary.

"Señhor Concregan," said he, addressing me, "you stand now committed, by virtue of a royal warrant, a copy of which, and of the charges laid against you, will be duly transmitted to you. Whenever the authorities have decided whether your offence should be submitted to a civil, or military tribunal, you will be brought up for trial."

"I am an English subject, sir," said I; "I belong to a nation that never permits its meanest member to be trampled on by foreign tyranny, far less will it suffer his liberty or life to be sacrificed to a false and infamous calumny. I claim the protection of my ambassador, or at least of such a representative of my country as your petty locality may possess. I desire —" What I was about to demand as my birthright was not destined to be made public on this occasion, since at a signal from the General the door opened, and two soldiers

advancing, adjusted handcuffs on my wrists, and led me away even before I had recovered from the surprise the whole proceeding occasioned me.

Whether it was that I enjoyed the prerogative of a state prisoner, or that the authorities were not quite clear that they were justified in what they were doing I cannot say, but my prison discipline was of the very mildest order. I had a most comfortable room, with a window looking seaward over the beautiful bay of Malaga, taking a wide range along shore, where gardens, and villas, and orange-groves extended for miles. The furniture was neat, and with some pretensions to luxury; and the fare, I am bound to own, was excellent. Books, and even newspapers, were freely supplied to me, and, save that at certain intervals the clank of a musket and the shuffling of feet in the corridor without, told that the sentry of my guard was being relieved, I could have fancied myself in some homely inn, without a restriction upon my liberty. My handcuffs had been removed the moment I had entered my chamber, and now the iron stanchions of my window were the only reminders of a gaol around me.

CHAPTER X.

Consolations of Diplomacy.

The first revulsion of feeling over — the terrible shock of that fall from the pinnacle of wealth and greatness to the lowly condition of a prisoner, unfriended and destitute, — I actually began to enjoy my life, and feel something wonderfully like happiness. I do not pretend to say that my disappointment was not most acute and painful, or that I suffered little from the contemplation of my ruined hopes. — No! far from it; but my grief, like the course of a mountain torrent, soon ran off, and left the stream of my life clear and untroubled as ever. It is true, thought I, this is a terrible contrast to what I was a week ago! but still, is it not a long way in advance of what my original condition promised? I am a prisoner in a Spanish fortress — is not even that better than a peasant in an Irish hovel? The very cares with which I am surrounded bespeak a certain consequence pertaining to me; I am one whom ministers of state think and speak about — whose name is often on their lips — whose memory haunts them in their half waking moments. Is not this something? Is it not a great deal to one, whose whole ideal was to avoid the bye-paths of life, and take his course in its very widest and busiest thoroughfares?

The occupations in which I passed my days greatly contributed to sustain this pleasant illusion. I was eternally writing letters, memorials, statements of facts and what not, of interminable narratives, to all our ministers and consuls, invoking their aid, and protesting in the name of the British nation against the unwarrantable tyranny of my imprisonment. It is quite true that these lengthy documents of mine *seemed to meet but* sorry acceptance. For a length of time

no acknowledgment of their reception ever reached me, but at last the following dry epistle informed me that my memorials had reached their destination: —

"Sir,—I am directed by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to acknowledge the receipt of your memorials, dated the 9th, 12th, 18th, 23rd, and 25th of last month, together with various letters bearing on the same subjects since that time, and to state in reply, that the matter of your complaint is at present under investigation with the authorities of the Spanish Government.

"His lordship the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs desires me to add his regrets, that even in the event of your liberation, he can hold out no prospect whatever that any compensation will be made to you for the loss of property you allege to have suffered, and which, of course, was incurred as one of the many risks natural to the course of such an expedition as you were engaged in.

"I have the honour to be, sir,

"F. O., London, "Your most obedient servant,

Oct. 18 —. "Joseph Backslip."

"To Cornelius Cregan, Esq."

This was a sad damper! To think that I was to lose the immense amount of property with which I had embarked. The gems and jewels, the rare objects of art; the equipages; the beautiful horses of purest Mexican blood! not to speak of that far greater loss — the large sum in actual money! but, then, what a consolation to remember, that a Secretary of State was mingling his sorrows with my own on the subject; that he actually gave an official character to his grief, by desiring the Under Secretary to convey "his regrets" in a despatch! his regrets — to me, Con Cregan! What inestimable words! That ever I should live to know that the Right Honourable *Lord Puzzleton*, the adored cherub of fashion — the admired *of coteries* — the worshipped of "the Commons" — the favoured

guest of Windsor, should, under the big seal of his office, assure me of his heartfelt sympathy!

I closed my eyes as I read the paragraph, and imagined that we were weeping together, like the "Babes in the Wood." "How they wrong this man," thought I, "in England — what calumnies they circulate about his levity, his heartlessness, and so forth: and see! look at him here, mingling in the private sorrows of an individual, and taking part in all the private woes of Con Cregan." By this beautiful artifice, I contrived to raise the aforesaid Con to a very considerable elevation in his own esteem; and thus, worthy reader, by pleasant fancies and ingenious illusions — wares that every man can fashion at will — did I contrive to make my prison at Malaga a most endurable resting-place; and even now to make its retrospect full of sweet memories!

Nor were my imaginings limited to such visions as these; for I loved to compare my condition with that of other exalted prisoners, and fancy how *my* conduct would read by the side of *theirs*. If I were less piously resigned — less submissive than Silvio Pellico — assuredly I showed more dignity in my fall than the Exile of St. Helena. I bore all the little vexations of my lot with a haughty reserve that entirely subdued every sign of a querulous nature, and seemed to say, "My time will come yet!"

At last it appeared, either as if my memorials were never opened, or if opened never read. No answer came whatever! and even the Malaga newspapers, which, in the dearth of shipping intelligence, would often insert some little notice of me, stating how "the 'Condé' walked yesterday for an hour upon 'the leads'" — "the 'Condé' partook with an appetite of a partridge, and conversed freely with the officer on duty," and so on, now they never by any chance alluded to me; and I seemed, for all the interest the world manifested about me, to have suffered a species of moral decease. It was the unhealthy season of the year, and the Consul had absented himself, leaving his functions to his "Vice," who having also a "*constitution*," had departed likewise, bequeathing the tra-

ditions and cares of office to his Dutch colleague, who neither spoke nor read any other tongue than that muddy language begotten of dykes and fogs. Wearied possibly by the daily arrival of half-a-quire of my remonstrances, or curious to see the machine by which these broad sheets were struck off with such unfailing celerity, this official arrived one day at the prison with an order from the Governor, permitting him to see the "Condé."

I was as usual writing away, when the turnkey announced his Excellency, (every official is Excellency if too low for Highness,) Mynheer van Hoagendrius, and a very short and immensely fat personage, dressed in a kind of black-and-white plaid jacket and trousers, entered. He looked like a huge chess-board set on legs. A grunt, a snort, a thick sound like a struggle between choking and gurgling ensued, which I concluded to be something in Dutch, and he seated himself opposite me.

I made my compliments to him, polyglot-wise, in French, English, Spanish, and at last German, — the last evidently striking a spark out of the embers of his cold intelligence, for he fixed his dull eyes upon me, and seemed as though he would soon wake up. Animated by this hope, I proceeded in my very best "Deutsch" to expound my sorrows to him. Fortunately for me my German had been acquired in the low companionship of "skippers" and sailors, and consequently bore a nearer resemblance to its half-brother of Holland than the more cultivated tongues of professors and philosophers.

I cannot, to this hour, say whether it arose from any interest in the narrative, or whether proceeding from the laudable desire to come at the truth in a question of much difficulty; but the Mynheer now came to me each morning, and usually stayed two hours, during which I talked and he smoked incessantly. Often, when he left me, have I asked myself "what progress I had made in his good opinion? how far had I made him master of my case?" but the question remained without an answer; for if occasionally a stray flash of intelligence would light up his dull features, on following the direction of

his eyes I could perceive that the animation arose from the sight of some fishing-boat returning loaded with turbot, or that the savoury odour of salt cod had saluted him from the shore. I felt at length as though I were sailing without a log-line. Nothing to mark my progress or say in what latitude I cruised.

My Dutch friend had now been visiting me for above six weeks; during which, if he had not supplied himself with every detail of my calamity, he had at least smoked all the choice tobacco which, as a favour from the governor, I was permitted to land for my own use, and as yet he had given no signs of life other than the act of fumigation aforesaid. I was half angry, half amused, at the little act of dexterity with which he emptied the last remnant of my pure Havannah into his pipe, and heard, with a kind of malicious satisfaction, the little sigh with which he pushed the empty canister away from him.

He seemed lost for some time in the slough of his Dutch reflections, but at length he fixed his eyes upon me, and in a low, suffocating tone said, "Hast a file?"

"No," said I.

"There then," said he, giving me a small parcel tightly tied up in paper. "Farewell;" and he moved towards the door, before I could recover from my surprise to thank him. As he reached it, he turned about, and in a very significant voice said, "Der bood est hardt" — a species of Plat-Deutsch I might not have understood if unaccompanied by a gesture, which implied that the ground was hard beneath my window, as a caution to me in the event of a leap.

No sooner was I alone than I opened my precious packet, which, besides two files, contained a small phial of aquafortis and another of oil, — the latter a useful adjunct to prevent the grating noise being heard. Having concealed the implements in a rat-hole, I proceeded to examine the iron bars of the window, which, although seemingly of great size and strength, *were in reality coated* with a rust of more than half their actual

thickness. This was a most inspiriting discovery, and at once animated me with glowing hopes of success.

As I could only work during the night, I affected illness as a reason for keeping my bed during the day, when I slept profoundly and refreshingly.

The non-success of all my efforts to interest diplomacy in my cause, was just beginning to impress me with a sense of gloom and despondency, when this new incident occurred to rally my drooping courage. Life had now an object, and that, if not always enough for happiness, is sufficient at least to rouse those energies, which, when stagnant, produce despair. How I longed for night to come that I might resume my labour! with what resolute industry I worked on during the dark hours, only ceasing when the change of the sentries brought the guard close beneath my window, and even grudging the few seconds thus wasted. With what delight I used to measure the fissure which, at first only deep enough for my nail, was now sufficient to cover the file! This I used to conceal each morning with bread coloured by the rusty powder that fell from the filing, so that, to all seeming, everything was in its usual order.

This was almost the only period of my life in which I remembered my father: from some similarity in our condition, perhaps, he was now seldom out of my thoughts. I used to wonder if he were still alive, and how situated; whether he was yet a convict going forth in chains to daily toil, or a "ticket-of-leave" man, working at some settlement in the "Bush." Did he ever think of me? Did he ever dream of his native land, or wish to return to it, and what prospect of escape did fortune hold out to him? That, after all, was the great link which bound him to my thoughts! was there any silent and sympathizing Dutchman to take pity on his captivity?

At the close of the fifth week, I had the inestimable pleasure of "reporting the breach practicable," or, in less sounding phrase, of assuring myself that the middle bar of the window

was removable at will, and thus a free egress was permitted me to an extensive terrace, which, with a low parapet, overlooked the bay for miles. This was about five-and-twenty feet from the ground, and was guarded beneath by a sentry, one of a chain of sentinels, whose "watch" extended around the entire fortress. The descent and the guard were then the only difficulties which now remained to be overcome, so far, at least, as mere liberation from the prison walls extended. I am sure I invented at least fifty choice stratagems, which afterthought always showed were perfectly worthless. I bethought me of bribing the sentry with the few gold pieces which I still possessed; but what security had I that he might not resist the seduction, or betray me even after receiving the money?

The fall, too, was considerable; nor was there anything to which I could attach my bedclothes to lower myself to the ground. It must be "a drop," and what a situation should I be in were I to break a bone, or even sprain my ankle in the effort? Alas! I now perceived that although the most laborious portion of my work was accomplished, the most difficult still remained to be done.

The obstacles to mere escape were sufficiently great to prevent me even thinking of the course to be pursued after I reached the ground in safety, for I was without friend, shelter, passport, or any means of disguise or concealment whatever.

I pondered long and carefully over the question, and already had two dreary weeks passed over since I had cut through the bar, and yet, so far as I could see, no nearer to liberation than when the solid iron enclosed me. My mind began to sink under the fatigue of unceasing contrivance, and a dreamy, dreary sense of hopelessness seemed gaining on me. It had been a dark cloudy day, with gusts of wind, followed by intervals of calm. The air was moist and heavy, and charged with the depressing influences which the "mestrale," that sickliest of all winds, ever brings. Masses of leaden-coloured clouds floated low over the sea, which was broken into a short, angry "jobbe," as if after a storm.

All betokened the approach of a gale of wind, and, as night set in, the signs of bad weather thickened. Scarcely had the sun set, when it became dark as pitch; the wind, which had lulled for a brief space previous, now sprung up, and the sea fretted and chafed against the rocks with that peculiar sharp chirping sound that presages "wind." The clank of chain cables — the plashing noise of falling anchors — the loud shouts of the sailors as they prepared to meet the gathering storm, even now heard — while, in the changing position of the different lights of the bay, I could discern the movements of the various vessels as they sought shelter or made ready for sea, in expectation of the "gale." The impenetrable darkness, the roaring wind, the flashing of the lights, the cries of the seamen, the hurrying of feet along the quays, and the sounds of different boats' crews departing in haste — all gave a charm to a scene of which the obscurity increased the interest. A large French steamer was to have sailed that night for Marseilles , but I overheard a voice from the street foretelling that the *Gazonne* might leave without her passengers, "as no one would go on board of her on such a night." A red lantern at the peak indicated the vessel, and I could see that she had changed her position and "taken up a berth" farther out in the bay.

I cannot tell by what instinct I selected her as a peculiar object of my interest, but so it was. I watched her unceasingly, and rarely took my eyes from the quarter where she lay, and when the heaving motion of the "red light" showed that she was tossing in a heavy sea, I listened too with eagerness to catch anything from those that passed beneath that might concern this vessel, which now engrossed all my sympathy. "Were I once but on board of her," thought I, "the wildest hurricane that ever blew would be sweeter to me than all the balmy airs that ever bore the odour of orange blossom through my barred window!" I would have braved the stormiest seas, the maddest gale, shipwreck itself, rather than longer remain *the helpless, hopeless* thing a life of imprisonment was making *of me.* "Would that the alternative were given me," said I

to myself; "the free choice to change these four walls for the deck over which the waves are dancing in foamy sheets! with what a thankful heart would I take the offer."

The last visit of the turnkey, who came to see all safe, broke in for a moment upon these musings; and now the double-locked door, and his retiring footsteps, told me that no further molestation was to be feared; and that I was, at least till daybreak, the undisturbed master of my own reveries. I opened the window, pushed back the iron stancheon, and walked out upon the terrace. It was a night of storm and wild hurricane. The rain swept by in great plashes, increasing the darkness, and mingling its hissing noise with the breaking crash of the sea, as it beat furiously against the rocks. The dancing, bobbing motion of the lights on board the different craft, showed what "a sea" was raging in the bay: while, even in the city itself, the clatter of falling tiles and chimneys, told the violence of the gale. I stood upon the terrace: and as the rain penetrated my frail garment, and the wind wafted my wet hair across my cheeks, I felt a sense of ecstasy that nothing in all my previous life had ever equalled. It was the sensation of freedom; it was the burst of delight with which the captive welcomes the long-lost liberty. "Better this," thought I, "than the snuggest chamber that ever called itself a prison."

It was past the hour when any further visit from the turnkey might be expected. Already the outer door of my chamber had been locked and barred with all that scrupulous attention to noise and clank that are supposed only essential in a melodrama. The sentry had just been relieved on the esplanade beneath the terrace, so that I might consider myself disencumbered from all fear of interruption in any quarter. I sat down upon the parapet, and peered into the dark depth below me, where the hazy glimmer of the sentry's lamp served to mark the height. At first it seemed a terrific drop; but after a while I began to satisfy myself that the darkness contributed to this effect; and as my sight grew more accustomed to the gloom, I was able to trace different objects; among others,

the conical roof of the sentry-box, at a distance of scarcely more than fifteen feet beneath me.

Thus far I could reach by making a rope of my bed-clothes, and attach one end to a portion of the battlement of the parapet; but how should I venture on a descent in such a place? how risk the almost certainty of recapture by the sentry himself? This was a formidable difficulty, and demanded much consideration; and yet were I to select any other spot, I might chance to be disabled by the fall, and then all my efforts were fruitless, since a broken bone, or even a sprained ankle, would be certain ruin.

Never was a knotty point more canvassed, the clue to a difficulty more zealously searched for! As generally happens in such cases, first thoughts are best, and the bold course the safest. By descending on the sentry-box, I should at least reach the ground without injury; and if I were to have a "tussle" for it with the guard, it would be without the disadvantage of a previous damage. Besides this, the incessant noise of the tempest, the crashing of the sea, and the deep booming of the thunder, gave hopes that my descent might be unheard. Nay, more — the sound of my heavy body over his head, would be rather an admonition to stay quietly within than risk himself outside, to the danger of tumbling tiles, or masses of masonry from the parapet. The more I reflected upon this, the clearer I saw that the storm was a heaven-sent accident for me; that the darkness, the tumult, and the deserted streets, were all accessaries the most favourable; that to neglect such an occasion of escape would be downright madness. If I took some time to arrive at this conclusion, I made up for the delay by the rapidity of my subsequent movements. I hastily returned to my room; and had I been bred a ropemaker, my two sheets and counterpane could not have been fashioned into a three-stranded rope more handily; and my sailor's experience favouring, I adjusted the cord in a "timber hith" round one of the battlements, and well satisfied *myself that I might* trust to the other extremity — "Con Cregan *and his fortunes.*"

I then took a hurried survey of my room, — trimmed my lamp that it might burn till morning, secured the three or four papers of value which still remained to me, and then issued forth to my enterprise.

A cannon-shot from the bay rung out as I again stepped upon the terrace, and I accepted the augury as an omen of welcome. I will not deny that my hands trembled as I examined, for the last time, the fastening of the cord; nor do I seek to conceal, that as I buttoned my coat, the beating of my heart smote heavily against my fingers. I even hesitated for an instant, — and during that instant, brief as it was, I could have faced death itself, rather than the uncertainty before me. The weakness passed quickly away, and with a short but fervent prayer, I grasped the rope, and slipped noiselessly over the parapet.

A sudden gust of wind swept past at the moment, and swung me out from the wall, as though I had been a thing of no weight; calling for all my strength to prevent me from being blown away! and now, I was buffeted about — tossed here and thrown there, with a violence that almost dislocated every joint in my body. The jerking motion, and the chafing of my rope on the parapet, made me tremble for my security, and not without cause; for in one great swing, in which I described an arc no other pendulum, living or dead, ever compassed before, I came back with such force against the roof of the sentry-box, striking it with both my feet together at the same instant, that my cord snapped short in the very centre.

The force of my fall, added to the previous blow, capsized the sentry-box, and I came to the ground along with it, in a state of fright, that even to this very hour I cannot recall without shuddering. Half-stunned by the fall — bruised and almost lifeless from terror, I sat there waiting for the moment when the sentry would issue forth and seize me; nor was it till after the lapse of several minutes that I perceived that the *soldier was in a trap*, the weighty sentrybox had fallen over

on the front, and effectually debarred him from any chance of self-extrication.

I stooped over to listen, but all was still; he never spoke a word — probably stunned by the shock, or he might have fainted from terror. Whatever the cause, neither my humanity nor my curiosity cared to explore further; but rising to my feet, and ascertaining to my inexpressible delight that I was uninjured, I set off at full speed toward the shore. The sea suggested escape, and thither I bent my way, without thinking more on the matter.

I could see from the hurried movement of lights along the pier, that boats were rapidly leaving for the various ships in the harbour. To get on board any of these, no matter what, or whither bound, was all my object, — a Tunis pirate, or a Malay prow, would have been a happy exchange for the black prison at Malaga.

I had almost run myself out of breath, when I came up with a knot of some dozen people were hastening onward as fast as they could. Two heavily laden barrows with luggage, and a multitude of cloaks, shawls, and mantle, pronounced them to be travellers; and I soon collected from the expressions dropped by the boatmen, that they were about to embark in the French steamer for Leghorn. Mingling with the group, which the darkness freely permitted, I heard a voice say in English, something about the weather; and now listening more attentively, I picked up that they were an English family hurrying to Pisa, to see a son, whose failing health gave them no time for delay. I gathered, too, that the packet, which should not have started till the next day, was now leaving suddenly: the captain having sent a message to say, that he had determined to put to sea rather than ride out the gale so near shore.

The travellers were mingling their complaints at this peremptory summons, with others over the absence of their courier, who had got leave to see some of his friends about a *league away*, and must now inevitably be left behind. In the *course of their* lamentings, I could learn that they had only

engaged the man the evening before at the recommendation of the landlord, and had scarcely seen him above a couple of times.

In fact, except that he was an Italian, and his name Raffaello, they knew nothing about him. At last they reached the jetty, where the boat lay, and now I could hear their discussion, whether it were better to leave the courier's effects behind or take them on, in the hope that he might yet come up.

"He's a smart fellow, and depend upon it he'll be here before we sail," said a young man of the party.

"No, no," cried another, "he'll never hear a word of the packet till she's half way to Leghorn."

"What did you tell him, William?" asked an elderly lady.

"To be back by six o'clock to-morrow morning," said the first speaker.

"Ay, but in what language did you speak?"

"I spoke Italian, and afterwards I said it in French, for he doesn't know one word of English."

This was all I wanted; I slipped noiselessly away, and, retiring to some distance behind the party, waited till I saw them descend the stairs to the boat. This occupied some time, for the party were numerous, and their trunks and portmanteaus were without end. At last, just as the word to shove off was given, I dashed forward at the top of my speed, crying out in Spanish, "Hold fast, there! wait for the courier!"

"What's the matter?" asked one of the Englishmen.

"A courier, Señhor," said a sailor, "wants to come with us."

"Oh, Raffaello, by George!" exclaimed the other; "I knew he'd be up: put back, men, he belongs to us."

"Pardon, signori," said I, stepping lightly over the gunwale, "*I have had* a sharp run for it;" and away we went!

Seated on a great coat of black sheepskin, which from style and cut I knew must have belonged to my predecessor Raffaello, I could see the rapid passage of lights on the shore in the direction of my late prison, and at last could detect one glimmering from a part of the building where my cell stood. The roll of drums beating to arms was soon heard, and it was evident to me that my escape had become known, —that the garrison of the fortress was on the alert to recapture me. Although fully a mile from land, and rowing with all the vigour of twelve stout sailors towards a vessel whose steam was already whizzing through the escape funnel, my heart almost sunk within me from very fear; and rather than be retaken, I would have jumped into the boiling tide that swelled and broke around me.

The sailors more than once relaxed their efforts to watch what was going forward on shore; and how fervently did I, in silence, curse their curiosity. Externally, however, I maintained my calm demeanour, and even ventured to conjecture that a fire must have broken out in the fortress, such was the commotion and excitement discernible in that quarter.

Another suggested the possibility of its being some prisoner that had made his escape, — a notion which I took occasion to ridicule, by averring that the carcel was reputed to be the strongest prison in Spain, and an instance of evasion altogether unknown.

Thus chatting we reached the steamer. To my intense delight the anchor was already weighed; and scarcely had we mounted the ladder, than she broached round, head to sea, and clove through the water like a fish.

Every plunge of the great ship shook the strong timbers, and made her huge framework tremble, sending a thrill of pleasure through me. With each mountain wave that rolled past, I saw my chance of safety increase, and knew that no boat — manned by Spaniards at least, would dare pursuit in such a storm. I had abundant leisure for these reflections, since my "masters" had only time to get on board when they retired to their berths overcome by sea-sickness, so that I was

at full liberty to indulge my own thoughts, and dispose of myself without the slightest interruption. From a smart little French maid I learned that the family was called Grimes, — that they had recently come from England, by way of Gibraltar, where one of the sons, now with them, was quartered with his regiment. That the party consisted of a widow lady with three daughters and two sons, — a third being the invalid at Pisa. They were rich, good sort of folks, very ignorant of the Continent, very credulous, and altogether a satisfactory kind of connexion for a cunning French *femme-de-chambre*, and a roguish courier to fall in with. This latter fact Mademoiselle Virginie insisted upon, with no small degree of self-gratulation, giving me to understand that we might have a very thriving career as fellow-labourers in the same vineyard.

Her sketches of English life, manners, and prejudices, were not a little amusing; while the rules she laid down for the due management and control of her masters, were a perfect chapter in domestic machiavelism. There had once been a time when I would have enlisted willingly under such a banner — glad to reach the upper story of life, even by such a back stair; but now that I had tasted the glorious supremacy of command myself, — that I had revelled in the mastery of a great household, — that I had rolled along in my own chariot, clothed in fine linen and faring sumptuously every day, I felt my return to a menial situation a degradation unendurable. I determined that once in Italy, I would escape from the thraldom of such servitude, come what might of it.

By long dwelling on the theme, I had contrived to impress myself with the most profound conviction that I was a much injured individual — that my case, if not sufficient for a war with Spain, was a fair ground for a parliamentary "flare-up," angry diplomatic notes, and heaven knows what threats of our outraged Foreign-office. That a man with such a glorious grievance should sink down into a courier — to wrangle with landlords, bully waiters, and flirt with the "maid in the *rumble*," was not to be thought of. I felt that I was sworn at

Highgate, and destined for the inside of the travelling-carriage, and not the "out."

Scarcely were we arrived at Leghorn, and installed at the San Marco, than I began to prepare for my emancipation; — a bold step, considering that all the available resources I possessed was a ruby ring set round with brilliants, which I had concealed in my cap along with my papers. I was admonished to lose no time in my departure, by remarking that another packet from Malaga was expected within a week, which probably would convey the rightful courier in search of his missing baggage, and I was by no means desirous of being confronted with the real Simon Pure.

I am not sure that this latter consideration did not weigh most with me in the matter — since the novelty of my situation and the sense of its creature-comforts might have induced me to linger a little longer in a capacity even as humble. With such people as the Grimes's the courier was supreme, and his rule despotic. From the hour at which they were to dine, to what they were to eat — how they were to spend the day — what to see, and what to avoid, were all at his dictation; while from the landlord came a perfect volley of civilities that plainly showed who was the real personage to whom adulation was due. If my masters dined on a chicken, *I* fed upon ortolans; while *they* made wry faces over their "Chianté," *I* luxuriated on Chateau La Rose or Chambertin. For *my* table were reserved the oysters of Venice, the fresh "sardines" of Gorgona — the delicate mutton of Pistoja — the delicious Becafica of the Val d'Arno, while Piscia was ransacked for my dessert, till I saw myself surrounded with rarities, that even in my great days I scarcely dreamed of.

There was a kind of "abandon" too in this mode of life that pleased me well, — a delightful sense of irresponsibility pervaded everything I did, or imagined.

The courier knows nothing of that hesitation which besets his master at the thought of some costly indulgence. *He neither doubts* nor denies himself. The Emperor of Russia *may have bespoke* the post-horses, but he knows how to bribe.

even against the Czar himself, and would intrigue for the fish intended for a cardinal's Friday dinner. He is perhaps the only traveller who is indifferent to the bill: nay, he even glories in its extravagance, as increasing his own per centage. I was beginning to see and appreciate all these advantages when caution admonished me to escape. The real Raffaello was doubtless already at sea, and might arrive ere I had evacuated the territory.

I only waited then to see "my family" snugly housed at Pisa, when I proceeded to tender my resignation. It was very flattering to my vanity to see the distress my announcement created. They evidently felt like a crew about to be deserted by the pilot in a difficult navigation. They were but indifferent linguists, and worse travellers; and I almost repented of my resolve as I perceived the dismay it occasioned, — the full measure of which I was admitted to witness, since — from my supposed ignorance of English — they discussed the question very freely in my presence.

"Does he say he's dissatisfied with his situation?" asked the old lady.

"It is difficult to make out what he means, mamma," replied a daughter.

"These fellows are always intriguing for higher wages," observed the subaltern.

"Or to engage with people of greater consequence," remarked the second son.

"We had better send for the tutor, mamma; he speaks French better than we do."

This proposition — albeit not accepted as a compliment to themselves by the two brothers — was at last acceded to, and, after a brief delay, the individual in question made his appearance. To avoid any semblance of understanding what went forward, I stood in patient silence, not even turning my head in the direction where the family were now grouped around the "Dragoman."

"*You are to find out what he wants*," said the old lady,

the epicure. He must be a connoisseur in wine, pictures, china, cuisine, statuary, engravings, armour, ancient furniture, manuscripts, horseflesh, the drama, and Bohemian glass; able to pack a trunk, or expatiate upon a Titian; to illustrate a fresco, to cheat a custom-house, to bully a prefect, make an omelette, ride postillion. These, with a running knowledge of international law, and the Code Napoleon, and some skill in all the minor operations of surgery — these are a brief summary of a courier's qualifications."

"And do you tell me, friend," said he, earnestly, "that you can do all this?"

"Indifferent well," said I, carelessly. "There are, doubtless, others who have gained a higher proficiency in the craft; but as I am still young, I'll not despair of future eminence."

He heaved a deep sigh, and leaned his head upon his hand.

I fancied I could read what was passing in his mind, and at a haphazard, said, "You are contrasting the catalogue with that of your own acquirements, and perhaps asking yourself to what end all the midnight toil of scholarship? why have I laboured hard with aching brow and fevered heart, when one with vulgar attainments like these — the scattered fragments — the crumbs that fall from the table of real knowledge, can secure a better livelihood and more real independence than myself; and the reason is, mine are marketable wares that find purchasers in every class, and among every gradation of society. 'My lord' must have his courier; so must the rich cotton-spinner or the barrister on his wedding tour. The wealthy dowager, the blooming widow, the ex-minister travelling for 'distraction,' the young heir journeying for dissipation. The prelate, the banker, the ruined duke, the newly-enriched mill-owner — all, however differing in other points, agree in this one want, and must have one who will think for them and speak for them, bargain and bully *for them, assert* their rank and importance wherever they *appear; so that of* the obstacles of travel, its difficulties and

contrarieties, they should know as little as though their road lay between London and Croydon."

"Still it is a puzzle to me," sighed the young man, "how these people achieve the attainments you speak of. Even a smattering of such knowledge would seem to require both time and study."

"They have but a smattering," said I; "yet it is gained exactly in the very school where such small proficiency goes farthest — 'the world' — and which you will one day discover has its courses of knowledge, its tests of ability, ay, and its degrees of honour, marked out as palpably as Oxford and Cambridge. There is this advantage, too, sir, over the university — the track in which you are to travel is marked out for you — you must not stray to the right or to the left; while in 'the world' the field of direction is wide, open, and expanded; there's a path for every one, if they'll only look for it."

He started as I said these words; and as his cheek flushed up, he said, "I remember once upon a time hearing those very words from a poor friendless boy in my own country. He was setting out, as he said, to seek his fortune, and his whole stock in life was the hope inspired by that sentiment."

"And what became of him?"

"I never could learn, — he disappeared suddenly, — and whether he enlisted into some regiment abroad, or died at home, I never ascertained."

"Then I can tell you, sir, — he now stands before you, the same whom once you so kindly succoured; the houseless, friendless child, whom you protected and sheltered — I am Con Cregan."

It would be difficult to describe the bewilderment of poor Lyndsay, as I said this; he sat down, closed his eyes, opened them again, rubbed them, stared at me, tried to speak, and at last, rising up, grasped my hand warmly, and cried, "Then of course you remember *my* name?"

"I could never forget it, Mr. Lyndsay," said I, affectionately.

This was enough, and he now shook me by both hand with all the warmth of old friendship.

As he was madly eager to learn the story of my life, and as I was bent on my departure by the morning mail for Genoa we agreed to meet at an hour when the household had retired to bed; meanwhile he was to charge himself with the office of making an explanation to the family, and informing them that matters of urgency required my presence at Paris without delay. This agreed upon, we separated.

The entire night we passed in talking, for he insisted upon hearing my adventures from the very hour we had parted company in Dublin, down to the moment we were then seated together. It was evident, at times, from the tone of questioning, that he accepted several of my statements at least as doubtful, but gradually, as he discovered my acquaintance with various languages, the knowledge I possessed of different remote countries, their habits and natural productions this incredulity gave way, and when finally I produced the letters of the Havannah banker: with the receipts for my instalments, he showed that every shade of hesitation had vanished, and that he no longer entertained a doubt of my veracity.

As the hour of separating drew nigh, he turned the subject to my own immediate requirements, and although I assured him that my ring, which I had already disposed of, was sufficient for all immediate wants, he insisted upon my accepting a loan of one hundred dollars, to be repaid, as he himself said, "when I resumed my countship." These were his parting words as I ascended to the roof of the diligence.

CHAPTER XI.

"A New Walk in Progressive Life."

I WILL not trespass on my reader's patience with the details of my journey, nor ask him to form acquaintance with any of those pleasant travelling companions whose whims, caprices, and merry fancies lightened the road. The company of a diligence is a little world in all its features of selfishness, apathy, trustfulness, credulity, and unbelief. It has its mock humilities and absurd pretensions even more glaringly displayed than every-day life exhibits them. Enough, then, if I say ours were fair specimens of the class, and when, on arriving at the Messageries Royales, the heavy "conveniency" deposited us in the court, we shook hands all round ere separating, like people who were well pleased when together, but yet not broken-hearted at the thought of parting.

And now I found myself at Paris, that glorious capital whose very air is the champagne of atmospheres, and where, amid the brilliant objects so lavishly thrown on every side, even the poor man forgets his poverty, and actually thinks he has some share in the gorgeous scene around him. I heaved one heavy sigh, from the very bottom of my heart, as I thought what might have been the condition in which I could once have rolled along these same streets, and with this brief tribute to the past I trudged along towards the embassy. All my hope lay in the prospect of an interference on the part of the English government, and the demand of an indemnification for my loss.

After some little delay, and a slight catechising on the part of a bulky porter in scarlet livery, I was admitted to a room where a number of people, chiefly couriers and "La-

quais de Place," were assembled, to obtain signatures or passports, and who were summoned from time to time to enter an inner chamber where the official sat. *My* turn came at length, and with a heart almost swelling to suffocation, I entered.

"For England, I suppose," said a pale young gentleman, with black moustaches, not looking up from the table, where he sat reading his *Galignani*.

"No, sir, mine is not a passport case. I am here to make a charge against the Spanish government for false imprisonment and spoliation."

The young gentleman raised his head, and stared at me fixedly for a couple of seconds, and then, in the most silvery of accents said, "Be good enough to repeat what you have said."

I did so; adding, "as my case has occupied the attention of the Foreign Office for some time back, you may possibly have heard of my name — Count Cregan."

The youth sprung up from his chair, and hastened into another room, whence I could hear loud shouts of laughter immediately proceeding.

"No, no, Barrington," said a deeper and an older voice. "I don't want to see the fellow, and I advise you to get rid of him at once. He'll be a bore to us every day of the week, if you give him the slightest encouragement."

"But is there really nothing in his case?"

"Nothing whatever; he is a downright impostor."

"But Puzzleton certainly corresponded with him."

"Of course he did, to prevent the opposition making a handle of his case in 'the House;' but he soon saw the whole thing was a trumped-up charge; and as we want to go on smoothly with the Madrid government, it would be absurd to disturb our relations for the sake of a fellow like this."

"Oh, that's it," said the *attaché*, catching a faint glimmering of the secret machinery of diplomacy.

"*To be sure*," added the other; "if we wanted a grievance, that man's would do as well as another; but there is

no need to hold him over, we can always catch the Spaniards tripping when we want it. My advice is, therefore, get rid of him. Say that he must embody his statement in the form of a memorial, supported by whatever he can adduce in the way of evidence; that a personal interview can lead to nothing; and, in fact, dismiss him in the usual way."

And with these lucid instructions — given in a tone far too loud to be diplomatic — the *attaché* returned to the room where I waited.

"You'll have to reduce this to writing, Count Cregan," said he, standing with his back to the fire, and assuming an air that he fancied was quite that of Talleyrand, "something in the form of a memorial, you understand."

"I have already done so, unsuccessfully," said I, shortly.

"Ah, — wasn't aware," sighed the young gentleman, stroking his moustache.

"The Secretary of Foreign Affairs acknowledged the receipt of my statement, and at one time held out some hope of redress."

"Ah, indeed!" echoed the other.

"The state of our relations with Spain, however," added I, "not requiring a grievance just then, my case was naturally shelved."

He started, bit his lip, and evinced unmistakeable signs of being ill at ease. "In fact," resumed I, growing warmer as I proceeded, "no further notice was taken of me than what barely sufficed to take my case out of the hands of Opposition members. I was assumed to be an impostor, because the moment was not favourable to believe me honest. Good diplomacy, perhaps, but rather lax morality. Now, sir, I have lost *my* cause — that is quite evident: let us see if *you* have gained *yours*. The press is the great vindicator of individual wrongs, and I'll make its columns the arena in which this struggle shall be decided."

"Be good enough to wait one instant, — take a seat, Count," observed the young gentleman, in his very politest *of tones, while he* hastily retired into the inner room once

more. This time the conversation was so low, that not a whisper reached me. After a few seconds he re-entered.

"Your case will be inquired into, Count, and representation made to the Spanish minister at this court. May I ask where you are staying here?"

"I have not yet taken up my residence at Paris."

"Your passport is of course with the police?"

I bowed an assent, while a sudden thought flashed across me. "They mean to send me out of the country!" The *attaché* had twice said, "Good morning," ere I remarked it, and with a hurried leavetaking I quitted the room, well aware of the folly into which a momentary fit of passion had betrayed me.

It was palpable enough — my passport would at once offer a ground for my expulsion, — I was an English subject, travelling on a Spanish passport. I must of course expect to be disowned by the Spanish minister, and not acknowledged by my own.

This was a sorry beginning, and I sauntered out into the streets in a very depressed state of mind. What was I to do? my funds were at a low ebb, — I had not above four hundred francs in the world. Into what career could I throw myself, and while obtaining a livelihood avoid discovery. I knew various things, in that smattering sort of way which, by the aid of puffing and notoriety, often succeed with the world; but yet notoriety was the very thing I most dreaded! There was nothing for it — but to change my name. Many would doubtless say, that this was not any great sacrifice, — need not have cost me any very poignant sufferings; but they would be wrong. I had clung to my name through all the changes and vicissitudes of my fortune, as though it embodied my very identity. It was to make that humble name a great one, that I had toiled and struggled through my whole life. In that obscure name lay the whole impulse of my darings. Take that from me, and you took away the *energy that sustained* me, and I sunk down into the mere *adventurer, living* on from day to day, and hour to hour, with-

t purpose or ambition. I had borne my name in the very west passages of my fortune, hoping, one day or other, to ntrast these dark periods with the brilliant hours of my stiny. And now I must abandon it! "Well, be it so," ought I, "and by way of compromise, I'll keep half of and call myself Monsieur Corneille; and as to nationality, ere need be little difficulty. Whenever a man talks indiffe- at Spanish, he says he is from the Basque. If he speaks d German, he calls himself an Austrian; so, I, if there be y irregularities in my regular verbs, will coolly assert that am a brave Belge, and a subject of king Leopold; and if mility be a virtue, this choice of a native land ought to do credit."

I raised my head from my musings at this moment, and ind myself at the corner of the Rue Goguenarde, exactly posite a house covered with placards and announcements m the street to the third story. A great board with gilt ters over the entrance, proclaiming it the "Bureau des iches" for all nations. Nor was the universality a mere tence, as a single glance could show the range of adver- ements, taking in everything, from an estate in Guada- pe, to a neat chamber in the Marais; from a foundry at ons to the sweeping of a passage in the Rue Rivoli. All nostrums of medicine, — all the cheap appliances of the let, remedies against corpulence, preventives to extreme aciation, how to grow hair, how to get rid of it, gover- ses, ballet-dancers, even ladies "with suitable portions l great personal attractions," were all at the command of rich enough to indulge his indolence. "There must surely something applicable to me in all these varied wants," ught I; and I entered a great room where several knots nen and women, of different ranks and conditions, were hered around large tablets of advertisements.

Some were in search of lost articles of dress, or jewellery, un-away child, or a missing spaniel; some inquiring for ap apartments, or economical modes of travel with others *g the same road*; but the greater number were in pursuit

of some means of livelihood, — and what a host they were! Professors of every art, science, and language; journalists, poets, tenors, gardeners, governesses, missionaries, rope-dancers, frail little damsels who performed as goddesses in a pantomime, and powerful fellows who performed the "life-models" of academies, together with a number of well-dressed gentlemen of a certain age, who announced themselves as "discreet friends to any party engaged in a delicate and difficult transaction."

My heart sunk within me as I saw the mass of capability by which I was surrounded. "What could the world want with me," thought I, "in such a glut of acquirements as I see here?" And I was about to turn away when my attention was drawn to a very little elderly man, who was most importunately entreating one of the clerks to do him some service or other. The old man's eagerness was actually painful to witness. "I will sell it for a mere nothing," said he, "although it cost me five hundred francs!"

"You'll be fortunate if you get one hundred for it," said the clerk.

"I would accept of even one hundred, nay! I'd take eighty," sighed the old man.

"So you ought," said the other. "These things are all at a discount now; men like more active and energetic situations. Retirement is not the taste of our day."

"Retirement," thought I, "that may be exactly what would suit *me* at this moment," and I drew near to listen.

"Find me a purchaser with seventy francs," ejaculated the old man, "and I'll close with him."

"What is it, Monsieur?" said I, bowing civilly to both.

"A 'quatorzième,' sir," said the clerk, interposing, that he might earn his commission in the event of a deal. "A quatorzième, and I am bound to say one of the best in this quarter of Paris. It takes in the Rue de la Chuine, the Place de la *Boucherie*, with a very large sweep of the Boulevard Mont *Parnasse.*"

"A quatorzième!" cried I, in amazement, "I never heard of any one living so high up. Are there really houses in Paris fourteen stories high!"

They both burst into a fit of laughing as I said this, and it was some time ere the clerk could recover his gravity sufficiently to reply; at last he said, "I perceive that Monsieur is a stranger to Paris and its ways, or he would know that a quatorzième is not an apartment fourteen stories high, but an individual who holds himself always in readiness at the dining-hours of his neighbourhood, to make the fourteenth at any table, where, by accident, the unlucky number of thirteen should be assembled; — a party which every well-informed person would otherwise scruple to sit down with. This, sir, is a quatorzième; and here is a gentleman desirous of disposing of his interest in such an enviable property."

To my question as to what were the necessary qualifications, they both answered in a kind of duet, by volubly recapitulating that nothing was needed but a suit of black and clean gloves; unobtrusive demeanour, and a moderate appetite, being the certain recommendations to a high professional success. I saw the chief requirement well — to eat little and to talk less — to come in with the soup and go out with the salad — never to partake of an *entrée*, nor drink save the "ordinaire:" these were the duties; the reward was ten francs. "It used to be a Napoleon, Monsieur," said the old man, wiping his eyes. "In the time of Charles the Tenth it was always a Napoleon, but these 'canailles' now-a-days have no reverence for anything; I have known even the ministry dine thirteen on a Friday; — to be sure the king was fired at two days afterwards for it — but nothing can teach them."

The old gentleman grew most communicative on the subject of his "walk," which he was only abandoning in consequence of the rheumatism, and the difficulty of ascending to dinner-parties on a high elevation. He depicted with enthusiasm the enjoyments of a profession that demanded, as *he observed, so little* previous study, was removed from all

added melancholy to my wearied spirit. It was such a night that none would have ventured out, who could have claimed the humblest roof to shelter him. The streets were perfectly deserted, and early as it was the shops were already closed for the night. The very lamps that swung to and fro with the wind, looked hazy and dim, amid the sweeping rain, and the chains clanked with the dreary cadence of a gibbet.

I knew it was needless to go through the ceremony of dressing on such a night. "Better face all the imaginary terrors of a thirteen party than brave the real danger of a storm like this," so I reasoned; and, in all the freedom of my tattered dressing-gown, I paced my room in a frame of mind very little above despair. "And this is Paris," cried I; "this the city, where in some hundred gilded saloons — at this very moment — are met men, brilliant in all the gifts of genius, and women more beautiful and more fascinating than the houris of Paradise. Wit and polished raillery — bright glances and soft smiles, are now mingling amid the glitter of stars, and crosses, and diamonds; while some thousands, like me, are actually famishing with hunger — too poor, even, to have a fire to thaw the icicles of despair that are gathering around the heart!

Had it not been better for me, if I had lived on in the same humble condition to which I was born, than have tasted of the fascinations of riches, to love and pine after them for ever! No! this I could not agree to. There were some moments of my glorious prosperity that well repaid me for all I had, or all I could suffer for them: and to whatever depth of evil destiny I might yet be reserved, I should carry with me the delicious memory of my once happiness. Con Cregan — the light-hearted — was himself again! Con — the vagrant — the passionate lover of whatever life offered of pleasure, of beauty, and of splendour — who only needed a good cash account with Coutts to make his existence a "fairy tale." I forgot for a moment that I lived in a mean chamber, with a broken *window, a fireless* grate, a table that never was graced with *a meal! a bed* that resembled a "board," and a chair, to

sit upon which without smashing, required the dexterity of a juggler.

A sharp knocking at my door cut short these meditations, and a voice at the same time cried out my name. "Come in," said I, authoritatively. I fancied it might be the landlord, and was not sorry to brave him — by the darkness. The door opened, and a figure, which even in the gloom I could perceive was that of a stranger, entered. "Monsieur de Corneille lives here?" said he.

"I have the humble honour to be that individual," responded I.

"Have you got no light? I have smashed my shins across a confounded chair," said he, querulously.

"You're all safe now," said I; "keep round by the wall, but take care of the rat-trap near the corner."

"Let's have a light, mon cher," said the other, half coaxingly.

"I never have a light," said I; "I detest glare — hate snuffing a candle, and can't endure the thought of patronizing Russia and her tallow."

"Couldn't we have a bit of fire, then?" asked he.

"Fire before Christmas!" exclaimed I; "are we in Tobolsk? What Sybarite talks of fire in Paris at this season?"

"I really am ambitious of seeing you, Monsieur," said the other; "can we not compass this object without any violence to your feelings?"

"Have you a cigar-case?" said I.

"Yes."

"Well, strike a light; and here's a letter which you may set fire to: you can thus make an inspection of me by 'inch of paper.'"

He laughed pleasantly at the conceit, and lighted the letter, by the aid of which, as he held it above his head, he *took a rapid survey* of the chamber and its contents, myself *being the chief moveable* it boasted.

sented me with a purse, whose pleasant weight descended into my palm with a sensation indescribably soft and soothing.

All this time we were rattling along towards Belleville at a rapid pace; and although the rain swept past in torrents, the lightning flashed, and the wind tore the strong trees from their roots, and strewed the ground with their gigantic limbs, I sat in a reverie of sweet and delightful fancies — the only alloy to my ecstasy being a passing fear that at each moment shot through me — Can this be real — am I awake? or has long fasting so weakened my faculties that this is but a delusion; and instead of hastening to a dinner-party with a royal guest, I am speeding onwards to a prison, or, mayhap, a madhouse. These fancies, at first but fitful and at intervals, became at length, so distressing, that I was on the very point of communicating them to my companion, and asking for his counsel and comfort, when we drove into a small avenue, and then almost immediately drew up in front of a porch, where amid a blaze of light stood three or four servants in gaudy liveries, awaiting our arrival.

"Well, Paul!" cried a young, fashionable-looking fellow, with a very imposing black beard — "What success?"

"I've won — here he is!" cried my companion. "Have I much time to spare?"

"Something less than two minutes," said the other, as he coolly surveyed me through his glass. "Present me, Paul."

"Mons. Alphonse de Langeron — Mons. de Corneille."

"The author of the 'Fancies by Star Light,' said I, bowing with a most respectful devotion.

"Guilty, sir! and of fifty other indiscretions — to the full as great," said he, laughing.

"Ah, sir, I know it by heart; that stanza on the 'Waled Letty,' haunts me like a dream."

"Sharp fellow, our friend the 'Quatorzième!'" whispered Alphonse to Paul, as we walked along towards the drawing-room.

How I should like to dwell upon the details of that dinner, *the most delightful* entertainment of my whole life! It needed

not the sudden transition from the dark and dreary chamber I inhabited to the gilded saloon, all in a blaze with wax-lights, to make me feel it such. The "service was splendid — the cookery perfection — the wines the rarest of every vintage — the apartment itself had all the chastened grandeur of a mediæval chamber, with the gorgeous splendour contributed by a magnificent beaufet of silver; — and the guests! what beauty and fascination of female loveliness — what charm of wit and agreeability among the men! The great damper upon my enjoyment was my actual doubt of the reality of the whole scene. It was not, alone, that all the splendour appeared so wonderful — that the glitter of gold, and the beauty of porcelain dazzled the eye; but the very names of the illustrious guests themselves, suggested incredulity. What wonder if I could not credit my senses, as I heard the first names in all the genius of France, on every side of me. Here the great historian, and philosopher, and statesman; there, the delightful lyric poet; yonder, the first novelist of Europe; and next to him the distinguished painter, whose great battle-piece was in commemoration of the young Prince beside him, a hero of "two-and-twenty."

Nothing could be more easy or familiar than the tone of conversation — that happy pleasantry, that tickles but never wounds, so unlike the English propensity for "quizzing" — that vulgar version of Gallic "badinage;" and then how eloquent, without pedantry — how sparkling and how suggestive! Ah, my kind reader, I see the rippling smile over the broad Atlantic of your countenance. You have guessed all the secret of my enthusiasm, and you know the mystery of my admiration. Be it so: I am ready to confess all. It was my own success that made the chief enchantment of the scene. I was the lion of the evening. Not a theme on which I did not hold forth, not a subject I did not discuss — politics, bull-fighting, cookery, dress, literature, duelling, the ballet, horse-racing, play, scandal, naval tactics, colonization, cotton-spinning, music, railroads, and the "*dry-rot.*" *I was* profound, playful, serious, jocose, in-

structive and amusing by turns. Madmlle. de la Bourdonaye, the first actress of the "Français," was charmed with my dramatic criticism; the poet — enthusiastic at my recital of a stanza of his own; the general pronounced me the very best judge of cavalry evolutions he had ever met; the great painter begged the favour of a visit from me at his studio; and the Prince's aid-de-camp — himself a distinguished soldier, told me, in a whisper, to hold myself disengaged for the following Wednesday.

These were, after all, but the precursors of greater triumphs in the drawing-room, where I played and sung several Mexican ballads; danced the Bolero with Madmlle. Rose Jasmin, of the Grand Opera; and lassoed a Mount Saint Bernard mastiff with the bell-rope. After this beat the statesman at chess; rolled up Indian cigarettes for the ladies, whom I taught to sit squaw fashion; told various anecdotes of my Prairie adventures; and wound up all, by concocting a bowl of "ponch à l'Americaine," at once the astonishment and the delight of all. I must not suffer myself to dwell longer on this theme, nor speak of that supper, with its champagne and calembourgs, its lyrics and its lobster salads, with ortolans, epigrams, seductive smiles, and maraschino jelly. Enough. — The orgies — for it was no less — lasted till nigh morning, and when we arose from table a pale streak of coming day was struggling between the margins of the curtains.

"His Royal Highness will set you down, Mons. de Corneille," said the aid-de-camp, advancing to me.

Blushing with pleasure and shame together, I accepted what could not be declined, and proceeded to take leave of my kind host and his friends. Cordial greetings, and flattering wishes soon to meet again met me on every side, and I retired actually overwhelmed with civil attentions.

"Do we pass by your quarter, Monsieur?" said his Royal Highness, as I took my seat in the carriage.

I would have given all my worldly wealth, and expectations *to boot*, to be able to say that I lived in the Place Ven-

dome or the Rue Royale; but there was no help for it; the murder would out one day, since my host knew my address; and with an easy, unabashed air, I said that I lodged in the Rue de la Forge, near the Mount St. Parnasse.

The Prince bowed, and took no notice of the announcement; but I thought that I could read a very peculiar twinkle in the eye of the aid-de-camp. I might have easily been mistaken, however, for I felt myself on my trial, and thought everything an accusation. How gratuitously I tortured myself, subsequent knowledge of life has repeatedly convinced me; for while to some upstart rich man, the acknowledgment of my humble abode would have been a shock sufficient to sever us for ever, to the Prince the matter had no other significance than that it suited my means, with which, whether ample or the reverse, he had no right to meddle. Indeed, I was not sorry to remain in doubt upon the fact, since, in the difficult negotiation between the aid-de-camp and the coachman, who had never so much as heard of my unhappy street, his Royal Highness never evinced any surprise whatever, but sat patiently to the end of the discussion, without vouchsafing even a word upon the subject.

"This must be the house, number 21,748," said the chasseur, at length; and we drew up at the well-known door, where the old porter sat reading on one side, while his wife was peeling carrots at the other.

It was the first moment of confusion I suffered, since I had left the same spot: but my cheek was in a flame, as the lacquey let down the steps, and offered me his arm to descend. The lowly veneration of the old porter, as he stared at the royal liveries and the emblazoned panels of the carriage, was but a sorry compensation for the mock servility of the chasseur, whose eyes seemed to look through into my very heart, so that I actually did not hear the parting words of the Prince, as the equipage drove away.

Curious anomaly! the half-insolent glances of the lacquey *sank deeper into* my spirit than the flattering smile of the

Prince's adieu. How much more alive is our nature to the pang of scorn than to the balm of kindness. These were my reflections as I entered my humble chamber, every portion of which seemed doubly miserable to me now. "Is it possible," thought I, "that I have endured this hitherto? have I really sat in that crazy old chair, and stretched my limbs upon that wretched pallet? Can it be real? or which is the delusion — my recent splendour or my present squalor?" Although up all night, I was far too much excited for sleep, even could I have persuaded myself to seek it on so humble a couch. I therefore set myself to think over the future, and wonder whether the brilliant scene in which I had so lately mixed, would remain in its isolated brightness amid the desolation of my life, or be the guide-star to future greatness and distinction. My late success emboldened me to think that Fortune had not yet deserted me. "Who knows," thought I, "but the Spaniards may behave handsomely yet, and make restitution of my property; or what if the Mexican banker should be a true man, and acknowledge my claim upon him?" "If I could but enlist the Prince in my cause," thought I again, "how certain should I be of the issue! French influence always was powerful in Spain. Napoleon used to say, 'There were no Pyrenees;' I should be content if there were only a good road over them to convey the dispatches that might assert my just right."

A quick step upon the stairs at that instant caught my ear; few ever ascended so high up as my story, so I listened, and almost at once my door was thrown open, and my host of the preceding evening rushed into the room. Having shaken hands with me cordially, he said, "Corneille, mon ami! I have made another wager about you; and although the sum is a trifling one, I am curious to ascertain if I am the winner. Jules de Montserrat, and Emile de Gency, and myself, had a dispute last night about your nationality, which ended in a bet. I am bound in honour not to tell you what our several *opinions and* guesses were; but still at liberty to ask you, ***what is your*** native country?"

"I am an Irishman, and derive my name from the ancient family of Cregan. Cornelius is but my christian name, which I assumed to cover the disgrace of my altered fortune."

"As to our wager, then, we were all in error, — none of us guessed Ireland. As to your being a man of birth and station, I need scarcely say, we were all agreed."

"Would it were otherwise," said I, with a deep sigh; "a humble position might be endured well enough, if unalloyed by the regrets of a condition forfeited for ever. If you are curious to hear a very unhappy story, I am willing to relate it."

"You couldn't do me a greater favour," said he, seating himself like one eager to listen.

"First, then, we'll have some breakfast," said I; "and then, with a good fire and no fear of interruption, — for I have not one acquaintance in Paris, — you shall hear my history from beginning to end."

Chocolate and cutlets, champagne and devilled kidneys, brioches, sardines, and coffee, made their appearance as rapidly as though such delicacies were in the habit of daily mounting these steep stairs; and a cheerful blaze glowed once more in a grate where the oldest inhabitant had never beheld a fire.

These preparations being made, we began our meal, and I opened my narrative. The reader must not feel offended with me, if I ventured to draw upon my imagination for the earlier facts of my history. Nature had not been generous to me in the article of a father; what great harm if I invented one for myself? Fortune had placed my birth beneath the thatched roof of an Irish cabin; was it not generous of me to call it the ancient baronial seat of the Cregans? She started me poor and in rags; I was above repining, and called myself rich and well nurtured; but why weary my reader with such a recital. If it was necessary to raise the foundation on fiction; the after events of my career I was satisfied to state *pretty nearly as they* happened, merely altering the reasons *for my journey* to the New World, which I ascribed to my

search after a great inheritance belonging to my family, who were originally from Andalusia, and grandees of Spain.

"And this of course you failed in," said my friend, who rather felt this portion of my story less interesting than certain other and more stirring passages.

"On the contrary," said I, "I succeeded perfectly. I not only discovered the banker in whose hands my family wealth was deposited, but established my claim most satisfactorily, and received a very large sum in gold, with bills to a high amount on various mecantile houses, besides leaving in his hands an important balance, for which I had no immediate necessity." After a slight sketch of my Mexican progress — very little embellished or exaggerated — I narrated my voyage to Europe and my capture at Malaga exactly as they occurred, circumstantially recording every detail of name and date I could remember down to the very moment of my reaching Paris.

"One question more, my dear friend," said M. Paul, after some fifty very searching interrogatories as closely argued as the cross-examination of a counsel at law. "One question more, and I have done; I know you'll not be offended at the liberty I am about to take — nay, I feel you'll be even gratified with my candour. Tell me, frankly, as between man and man, is there one word of truth in all this, or is it not downright moonshine — sheer invention, from beginning to end?"

I started to my legs, my face crimson with anger, but as suddenly recovering myself, said, "You were right, sir, to bespeak a degree of command over my feelings before you ventured upon this freedom, which if I cannot altogether pardon, yet I will not resent."

"So it is true, then," said he, with a degree of melancholy in his voice I could not fathom.

"Of course it is," rejoined I.

"Sorry to hear it; deeply, sincerely sorry, that's all," *replied he in* the self-same manner; — "I cannot express to *you one-half of* my disappointment."

"Sorrow! disappointment!" exclaimed I. "May I ask what possible interest you could have in supposing me to be an impostor and a cheat."

"Hard names these," said he, laughing; "but I will explain myself: if the story that you have just told me were fiction, I could give you three hundred francs a day to write feuilletons for the *Débats*. If one-half of it were even invention, you'd be worth two hundred on the *Siècle* or the *Presse;* say you stole the material, and you'd still do admirably for the *Mode*.

"Are you — so conversant with a hundred thousand things — ignorant that the grand principle of division of labour has extended itself from the common arts of manufacture, to the operations of genius; and that, now-a-days, no man would think of composing an entire work himself, any more than he would of turning mason, carpenter, slater, locksmith, and glazier, were he about to build a house. On the contrary, having fixed upon the site, and determined the proportions of his future edifice, he surrounds himself with competent and skilful hands in all the several walks of constructiveness; reserving to himself that supervision and direction, which could not be practicable were he engaged in actual labour; thus is he a master-builder in fiction, — selecting his artificers — storing his materials — apportioning the quantity — keenly watching the variations in public taste — and producing at last a mass and variety that no one brain — however fertile and assiduous — could be capable of. This," said he, drawing himself up proudly, "this is my walk. By the aid of this discovery — for it is mine, and mine only — I am enabled to draw tears in the *Débats* and convulse with laughter in the *Constitutionnel;* and while writing of the torrid zone in one journal, I have an Icelander as my hero in another. Men stare at the range of my knowledge of life under aspects so various and discordant; and well may they wonder, were I to draw upon my own unassisted faculties. But it is men like *you, Cregan, I want:* shrewd, sharp, ready-witted dogs, *quick to remark,* and quicker to report. What say you, then,

will you join my corps in the fiction-foundry over which I preside?"

"Were I but capable —"

"You are eminently so. We need no literary ability — no craft of authorship — no more than the child who picks the wool in the factory is called on to direct the loom that weaves it into cloth. Let me finish the article; I'll give it the gloss for sale! What say you? five thousand franks a-year — free admission to every theatre in Paris, and a dinner at 'La Trou aux Bois' — where you dined yesterday — every Sunday?"

"A bargain," cried I, in ecstasy.

"Concluded by both parties, who thus acknowledge their hand and seal," cried he, tossing off a glass of champagne, and then rising from the table he prepared to take his leave. "I conclude," said he, that you'll not continue your residence here much longer. Seek out some quarter less near to heaven, and more accessible to poor human nature."

I promised to follow the advice, and we separated. He to repair to his haunts — the cafés, the editorial snuggeries, and other gossip shops of Paris; and I to seek out a more congenial abode, and one more befitting the favourable turn which Fate had now imparted to my fortune.

The afternoon of that same day saw me installed in a pleasant little apartment overlooking the garden of the Luxembourg, and where, from a little terrace, I could inhale the odour of the orange blossoms, and see the children at play amid the plashing of fountains and the waving of the tall grass. It was, as I discovered, the quarter of the whole artiste class, — poets, painters, actors, sculptors, feuilletonists, and caricaturists; nor was it difficult to ascertain the fact, as a certain extravagance of beard, various modifications of hat, and peculiarly-cut coats and trousers, presented themselves at every moment. Resolving to don "the livery of my race," I made my appearance in a suit of coffee-brown, hat and russet boots to match; as for beard, a life of *seclusion for several* weeks had only left me the task of *[illegible]uchment;* and the barber, whose services I invoked, had

but to ask my career to impress me with that artiste stamp, that makes every full-faced man a mock "Holbein," and every thin one a bad Vandyke.

"The novelists wear it straight across, and square below the chin, sir," said he. "This is a plate of Monsieur Eugene Sue; but there is a certain dash of energy about Monsieur's eyes — a kind of 'beauté insolente,' if I may be pardoned the phrase, that would warrant the beard to be pointed. May I venture to trim Monsieur as Salvator Rosa?"

"Use your own discretion, Monsieur Palmyre," said I; "the responsibility is great, and I will not clog it by even a suggestion."

To say that I could not have known myself on arising from his hands is no exaggeration, so perfectly changed had my features become in their expression. As a disguise, it was perfect; and this alone was no small recommendation.

As I walked the alleys of the Luxembourg, where at every instant men travestied like myself, came and went, I could not help recalling the classical assertion, that "no two augurs could meet face to face without laughing," and I wondered excessively how we artistes surveyed each other, and preserved even a decent gravity.

My career as a littérateur began the next day, and I received a short editorial summons from the office of *La Tempête* to furnish a feuilleton of a hundred and twenty-four lines; the postscript adding, that as Admiral Du Guesclin had just arrived from Macao, some "esquisses des mœurs Chinoises" would be well timed. Of China I only knew what a lacquered tea-tray and the willow pattern could teach me; but I set to work at once, and by assuming my sketches to be personal adventures and experiences, made up a most imposing account of Chinese domesticity.

The article had an immense success: the air of veracity was perfect; and the very officers of the fleet were so deluded by the imposition, as to believe they must have frequently *met me at thang-kee-shing* or Fong-wong-loo.

Thus was I launched into a career, of all others the most amusing, the most exciting, and I must also add, the most dissipated. Living apart from all mankind in a little circle of our own, where we only recognised the world as we ourselves were pleased to paint it, our whole lives were one long scoff and sneer at everybody and everything. Friendship meant the habit of meeting at dinner; the highest nobility of soul was his who paid the reckoning.

If there was little actual happiness among us, there was certainly no care nor any touch of sorrow. A great picture condemned, a poem cut to pieces, a play hissed off, only suggested a "souper de consolation," when the unlucky author would be the first to cut jokes upon his own failure, and ridicule the offspring of his own brains. Who could look for sympathy where men had no feeling for themselves! Even thieves, the proverb tells us, observe "honour" with each other; but we were worse than thieves, since we actually lived and grew fat upon each other's mishaps. If one exhibited a statue at the Louvre, another was sure to caricature it for the Passage de l'Opera. If one brought out a grand drama at the Français, a burlesque was certain to follow it at the Palais Royal. Every little trait that near intercourse and familiarity discloses, every weakness that is laid bare in the freedom of friendly association, were made venal, and worth so much a line for *Le Voleur* or *L'Espion*.

As to any sulking, or dreaming of resenting these infractions, he might as well try to repress the free-and-easy habits of a midshipman's berth. They were the "masonry of the craft," which each tacitly subscribed to when he entered it.

All intercourse was completely gladiatorial, not for display, but for defence. Everlasting badinage on every subject and on everybody was the order of each day; and as success was to the full as much quizzed as failure, any exhibition of vanity or self-gratulation met a heavy retribution. *Woe unto him* whose romance went through three editions in

a fortnight, or whom the audience called for at the conclusion of his drama!

As for the fairer portion of our guild, being for the most part ostracised in general society, they bore a grudge against their sex, and affected a thousand airs of mannishness. Some always dressed in male attire; many sported little moustaches and chin-tufts, rode man-fashion in the Bois de Boulogne, fought duels, and all smoked. Like other converts, they went farther in their faith than the old believers, and talked Communism, Socialism, and Saint Simonianism, with a freedom that rose high above all the little prejudices ordinary life fosters.

If great crimes, such as shock the world by their enormity, were quite unknown among us, all the vices, practicable within the Law and the Code Napoleon, were widely popular, and the worst of it all was, none seemed to have the remotest conception that he was not the beau ideal of morality. The simple fact was, we assumed a very low standard of *right*, and chose to walk even under *that*.

With Paris, and all its varied forms of life, I soon became perfectly familiar; not merely that city which occupies the Faubourg St. Honoré, or St. Germain — not the Paris of the Boulevards or the Palais Royal only; but with Quartier St. Denis, the Batignolles, the Cité, and the Pays Latin. I knew every dialect, from the slang of fashion to the conventional language of its lowest populace. I heard every rumour, from the cabinet of the Minister, down to the latest gossip of the "Coulisses;" what the world said and thought, in each of its varying and dissimilar sections; how each political move was judged; what was the public feeling for this or that measure; how the "many-headed" were satisfied or dissatisfied, whether with the measures of the ministry, or the legs of the new danseuse; and thus I became the very perfection of a feuilletoniste. There is but one secret in this species of literature — the ever watchful observation of the *public — and when it is* considered that this is a Parisian *public, the task is not* quite so easy as some would deem it.

This watchfulness, and a certain hardihood that never shrinks from any theme, however sacred to the conventional reserves of the general world, are all the requisites.

I have said it was a most amusing life; and if eternal excitement — if the onward rush of new emotions, the never-ceasing flow of stimulating thoughts, could have sufficed for happiness, I might have been, and ought to have been, contented. Still the whole was UNREAL. Not alone was the world we had made for ourselves unreal, but all our judgments, all our speculations, our hopes, fears, anticipations, our very likings and dislikings! our antipathies were mock; and what we denounced with all the pretended seriousness of heartfelt conviction in one journal, we not unfrequently pronounced to be a heaven-sent blessing in another. Bravos of the pen — we had no other principle than our pay, and were utterly indifferent at whom we struck, even though the blow should prove fatal. That we should become sceptical on every subject; that we should cease to bestow credence on anything; believing that all around was false, hypocritical, and unreal as ourselves, was natural enough; but this frame of mind bears its own weighty retribution, and not even the miserable victim of superstitious fear, dreads solitude like him whose mind demands the constant stimulant of intercourse, the torrent of new ideas, that whirls him along, unreflecting and unthinking.

It will be easily seen that all my narrative of myself met but little faith in such company. They unhesitatingly rejected the whole story of my wealth; and my future restoration to rank and riches used to be employed as a kind of synonym for the Greek calends. The worst of all this was, their disbelief infected even me, and I gradually began to look upon myself as an impostor. My hope — the guide-star that cheered me in many a dark and gloomy period — began to wane, and I felt that ere long all those aspirations which had spirited me on in life would lie cold and dead within me, and that my *horizon* would extend no further than where each daily sun *sunk to rest.* To show any discontent with my walk, to

evince, in the slightest degree, any misgivings that we of "La petite Presse" did not give laws to taste, morals, jurisprudence, and legislation, would have been high treason. To imply a doubt that we held in our hands, not alone the destinies of Paris, but of Europe — of all civilization — would have been a rank and outrageous heresy. Like the priest, the journalist can never unfrock himself. The mark of the ink, more tenacious than the blood on Lady Macbeth's fingers, will "never out." What, then, could I do? for, wearied of my calling, I yearned for a little truth, — for a new glimpse of reality, however short and fleeting.

Full of these thoughts, I repaired one morning to the Trou-aux-Bois, where fortunately I found my friend Paul alone; at least, except three secretaries, to whom he was dictating by turns, he had no one with him! "Wait till I have finished this 'Attack of Wolves on a Caravan,'" said he, "and the 'Death of Jules de Tavanne by Poison,' and I'm your man; meanwhile step into my study — there are masses of newspapers and letters, which you can read freely."

He did not detain me long; apparently the wolves were weak, and soon beaten off, and the poison was strong, and soon did its work; for he joined me in less than half an hour.

My explanation was listened to patiently, and what surprised me more, without astonishment. He saw nothing exaggerated or high-flown in the difficulties I started; and even went the length of confessing, that many of my objections had occurred to his own mind. "But then," said he, "what is to be done. If you turn soldier, are you always certain that you will concur in the justice of the cause for which you fight? Become a lawyer, and is not half your life passed in arraigning the right, and defending the wrong? Try medicine; and where will be your 'practice' if you only prescribe for the really afflicted, and do not indulge the caprices, and foster the complainings of the 'malade imaginaire?' As an apothecary, you would vend poisons: as an architect, you would devise gaols and penitentiaries, and so

to the end of the chapter. Optimism is just as impracticable as it is dangerous. Accept the world as you find it, not because it is the best, but because it is the only policy; and, above all, be slow in changing a career where you have met with success. The best proof that it suits you is, that the public think so."

Being determined on my course, I now affected a desire to see life in some other form, and observe mankind under some other aspect. To this he assented freely; and after a few moments' discussion, suddenly bethought him of a letter he had received that very morning. "You remember the Duc de St. Cloud, whom you met at dinner the first day you spent here?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, he was, as you are aware, ordered off to Africa, to take a high military command a few days after, and has not since returned to France. This day I have received a letter from him, asking me to recommend some one among my literary acquaintances to fill the office of his private secretary. You are exactly the man for the appointment. The duties are light, the pay liberal, the position agreeable in every way; and in fact, for one who desires to see something of the world, which the Boulevard du Gent and the Café de Paris cannot show him, the opportunity is first-rate."

The proposal overjoyed me! had I been called on to invent a post for myself, this was exactly the thing I should have fancied. A campaign against the Arabs — the novelty of country, people, and events — a life of adventure, with a prince for my companion — these were the very crowning desires of my ambition.

"I'll write about it this very day: there will be a mail for Algiers made up this evening, and not a moment shall be lost in making the application."

I could not express one half my gratitude for this opportune kindness; and when I again turned my steps toward *Paris, my* heart had regained the buoyant elasticity which *had so often lifted* me above all the troubled waves of life.

CHAPTER XII.

"Moi et mon Prince."

— Jules Janin.

In less than a fortnight after the interview I have just recorded, I received a letter from De Minérale, inclosing another addressed to himself, and whose royal seal at once proclaimed the writer. De Minérale's was only a few lines, thus:

"Dear C. — I forward you the 'Duke's' reply to my note, by which you will see that we have been in time, and fortunate enough to secure your appointment. Lose not a moment in fulfilling the instructions contained in it, and dine with me to-day at the 'Frères,' at seven.

"Yours, P. de M."

The Duke's epistle, almost equally brief, was to the effect:

"Head Quarters, Oran.

"My dear De Minérale, — Of course I remember perfectly our friend the 'Quatorzième,' whose lucubrations in the journals I have since been much amused with. In some respects he would suit me well, being a fellow of high animal spirits — great readiness — and, if I mistake not, well fitted for the rough usage of a campaign. But, it strikes me, that if his position be such as you represent it, the exchange would be anything but profitable. This is a land of few pleasures and no luxuries. Tell him that we never see truffles — that champagne is only a tradition; and, except Moorish damsels, who never show us more of their faces than a pair of eyes — darting *fire* and anger — we have no beauties. Yet, if, *despite all these* drawbacks, he be still willing to tempt his

fortune, and trust to 'a razzia' for the rest, let him call on Count du Vergnoble, at the 'Ministère de la Guerre,' where he will find everything in readiness for his appointment.

"Should he desire it, he can also receive his commission in my own regiment, the 13th Chasseurs-à-cheval; and as he will not be called on for duty, he might as well accept an appointment that will at least give him forage for his horses and some other advantages.

"Send me all the new things that are out, and tell me what you and Alphonse are doing. 'Mes amitiés' to our fair friend in the Rue Ponchaule, and the like — indiscriminately — to all the others.

"Yours affectionately,

H. de St. C.

"You call him 'Le Comte de Creganne,' and so I have written it for the Minister — is this right?"

I read and re-read the letter till I knew every sentence of it by heart; and then, dressing myself with a degree of care the importance of the occasion suggested, I drove off for the Minister's office. It was not the hour of his usual reception; but on sending in my name, which I did as Le Comte de Creganne, I was at once admitted.

His Excellency was all smiles and affability, praised his Royal Highness's selection of a name so greatly honoured in literature, and paid me many flattering compliments on my writings, which, by the way, he confounded with those of half-a-dozen others; and then, after a variety of civil speeches, gently diverged into a modest inquiry as to my native country, rank, and fortune. "We live in days, mon cher Comte," said he, laughing, "in which high capacity and talent happily take precedence of mere lineage; but still an illustrious personage has always insisted upon the necessity of those immediately about the person of the princes being of noble families. I am quite aware that you can fulfil every condition of the

kind, and only desire such information as may satisfy his Majesty.",

I replied by relating the capture of my property at Malaga, which, among other things, contained all the title-deeds of my estates, and the patent of my nobility. "These alone," said I, producing the banker's letters addressed to me as Condé de Cregano, "are all that remain to me now to remind me of my former standing; and although, as born a British subject, I might at once apply to my minister to substantiate my claims, the unhappy events of Ireland which enlisted my family in the ranks of her patriots, have made us exiles — proscribed exiles for ever."

This explanation went further than my previous one. The old French antipathy to England found sympathy for Irish rebellion at once; and after a very brief discussion, my appointment was filled up, and I was named Private Secretary to the Duc de St. Cloud, and Lieutenant in the 13th Regiment of Chasseurs-à-cheval.

A new career had now opened before me, and it was one of all others the most to my choice. The war in Africa had become by that time a kind of crusade; it was the only field where Frenchmen could win fame and honour in arms, and the military fever of the nation was at its height. Into this enthusiasm I threw myself ardently; nor did it need the stimulation derived from a new and most becoming uniform, to make me fancy myself a very Bayard in chivalry.

A truly busy week was spent by me in preparations for departure: as I had to be presented at a private audience of the Court, to wait upon various high official personages, to receive instructions on many points, and lastly, to preside at a parting dinner, which I was to give to my literary brethren, before retiring from the guild for ever.

Last dinners and leave-takings are generally sad affairs; this of mine was, however, an exception. It was a perfect orgie of wild and enthusiastic gaiety. All the beauty which theatres and the "artiste" class generally could boast, was united with the brilliancy and convivial excellence of the

cleverest men in Paris — the professional sayers of smart things — the ready-witted ones, whose epigrams were sufficient to smash a cabinet, or laugh down a new treaty; and all in high spirits, since what promoted *me*, also left a vacancy in the corps, that gave many others a step in the ranks of letters.

What speeches were made in my honour — what toasts, prefaced by all the exaggeration of praise that would have been fulsome, save for the lurking diablerie of fun, that every now and then burst forth in the midst of them! And then there were odes, and sonnets, and songs, in which my future achievements were pictured in a vein half-flattering, half-satirical — that peculiar eau sucré, with a squeeze of lemon, that only a Frenchman knows how to concoct!

During one of my most triumphant moments, when two of the very prettiest actresses of the "Odéon" were placing a laurel crown upon my brow, a cabinet-messenger was announced, and presented me with an order to repair at once to the Tuileries with my official letter of appointment, as his Majesty, by some accident, had forgotten to append to it his signature. Apologizing to my worthy friends for a brief absence, which they assured me should be devoted to expatiating on those virtues of my character which my presence interdicted them from enlarging upon, I arose and left the room. It was necessary to arrange the disorder of my dress and appearance, and I made a hurried dressing, bathing my temples in cold water, and composing myself, so far as might be, into a condition fit to meet the eyes of royalty — two of my friends accompanying me the while, and lending their assistance to my toilet. They at length pronounced me perfect, and I drove off.

Although already past midnight, the king, with several members of the royal family, were seated at tea — two of the ministers, a few general officers, and a foreign ambassador, being of the party.

Into this circle, in which there was nothing to inspire awe, *save the actual* rank of the illustrious personages themselves,

I was now introduced by the Minister of War. "Le Comte de Creganne, please your Majesty," said he, twice, ere the king heard him.

"Ah! very true," said the king, turning round, and with a smile of most cordial expression, adding, "My dear Count, it seems I had forgotten to sign your appointment — a mistake that might have caused you some inconvenience and delay at Algiers. Pray let me amend this piece of forgetfulness."

I bowed respectfully, and deposited before him the great square envelope, with the huge official seal annexed, that contained my nomination.

"The Princess de Verneuil will be happy to give you some tea, Count," said the king, motioning me to sit down, and I obeyed, while my heart, beating violently at my side, almost overpowered me with emotion. Only to think of it! — the son of an Irish peasant seated at the family tea-table of a great sovereign, and the princess herself, the daughter of a king, pouring out his tea!

If nothing short of the most consummate effrontery can maintain a cool, unaffected indifference in presence of royalty, there is another frame of mind indicative of ease and self-possession, perfectly compatible with a kingly presence; and this is altogether dependent on the manner and tone of the sovereign himself. The king — I have heard it was his usual manner — was as free from any assumption of superiority as would be any private gentleman under his own roof; his conversation was maintained in a tone of perfect familiarity with all around him, and even when differing in opinion with any one, there was a degree of almost deference in the way he insinuated his own views.

On this occasion he directed nearly all his attention to myself, and made Ireland the subject, asking a vast variety of questions, chiefly regarding the condition of the peasantry, their modes of life, habits of thinking, education, and future prospects. I saw that my statements were all new to him, that *he was not* prepared for much that I told him, and he

standing in the same place, evidently unable to resolve the difficult problem of my veraciousness.

And now I am approaching a chapter of my history whose adventures and chances are alone a story in themselves. The varied fortunes of a campaign in a strange land, with strange enemies, new scenes and climate, of course were not without incidents to diversify and interest them; and although I could probably select more passages of curious adventure from this than from any other portion of my life, I am forced to pass by all in silence; and for these reasons: first, the narrative would lead me to a greater length than I have any right to presume upon in this history, or to believe that my reader would be a willing party to; and, secondly, the recital would entail the acquaintance with a vast variety of characters, not one of whom ever again occurred to me in life, and of whom, when I quitted Africa, their very names never were heard by me more. And here I may be pardoned for saying, that I have been sadly constrained in these my Confessions, to avoid, upon the one hand, any mention of those persons who merely exercised a passing influence on my fortunes, and yet to show by what agencies of personal acquaintanceship my character became formed and moulded. In a novel, the world would seem to consist of only the very characters introduced, or rather, the characters serve as abstractions, to represent certain qualities and passions of mankind; but in real life is this the case? Nay, is it not precisely the reverse? Do not the chance intimacies we form in the steam-boat, or the diligence, very frequently leave deep and lasting impressions behind them? Are not phrases remembered, and words treasured up as axioms, that we have heard passingly from those we are never to see again? Of how many of our strongest convictions the origin was mere accident, — ideas dropped, like those seeds of distant plants that are borne for thousands of miles upon the wind, and let fall in some far away land to take root and fructify? And are these the agencies to be omitted when *a man would* give a "confession" to the world? Why are the *letters of an* individual his best biography, save as recording

his judgment upon passing events or people, with whom, in all likelihood, he has little subsequent connexion? But enough of this — I have said sufficient for apology to those who see the difficulty of the case. To those who do not, I have been prolix without being profitable.

Of Africa, then, I must not speak. Three years of its burning sun and parched soil — the life of bivouac and battle — had done the work of ten upon my constitution and appearance. I was bronzed almost to a Moorish tint; a few straggling hairs of grey showed themselves in my dark beard and moustache, while emergencies and hazards of different kinds had imparted a sterner character to my features, that little resembled the careless gaiety of my earlier days. In addition to this, I was wounded; a sabre cut received in defending the Prince from an attack of Arab horsemen, had severed the muscles of my right arm; and although encouraged to believe that I should yet recover its use, I was, for the time at least, totally disabled, and as incompetent to wield a sword as a pen. A very flattering mention of me in "general orders," my name recorded in a despatch, and the ribbon of the "Legion," well rewarded me for these mishaps; and now, as a season of peace intervened, I was about to return to France with the rank of "Chef d'Escadron," and the fame of a distinguished officer. As the Prince, my master, was to make a tour in the provinces before his return to Paris, permission was given me to visit Italy, whither the physician advised me to repair to recruit my strength, before adventuring upon the trials of a more northern climate. The "Duc" overwhelmed me with kind protestations at parting, and gave me a letter to the French minister at Naples, especially commending me to his friendship, and speaking of my services in terms that my modesty cannot permit me to repeat. Thus was Fortune once more my friend; and could I have but obliterated all memory of the past, and of those fatal riches — the brief enjoyment of which had given an impulse to all my desires — I might now have been well contented. High character as a soldier, a certain rank in the service, and the friendship of a Royal Prince,

were not trifling advantages to one who had often sued destiny with success, even "*in formâ pauperis;*" still, the "great game" I should have played, as the man of large fortune, was never out of my thoughts, and in secret I resolved to return to Mexico, and, as the phrase has it, "look after my affairs."

This determination grew more fixed the longer I considered it; and here I may remark, that the document to which the king had appended his signature and approval, was a statement of my claims on Spain, drawn up by myself, — one of those hundred representations which I made in idle hours, to while away time and amuse hope. If I was well aware that the signature was obtained by a mere accident, and without knowledge of the contents, I was not deterred from speculating, as to what useful purpose it might be employed; scruples of conscience being, of all things in the world, those I best knew how to dispose of.

On reaching Naples, I discovered that the Envoy to whom my letter was addressed had just been re-called, and in his place a young Secretary of Embassy was officiating. One of those admirably-dressed and inimitably-gloved young gentlemen, whom France despatches to foreign countries as representatives of her skill in neckcloths and waistcoats, and her incomparable superiority in lacquered leather. Monsieur de Bussenaç was a veritable type of Paris dandyism — vain, empty, and conceited; with considerable smartness in conversation, and unquestionable personal courage; his life was passed in abusing England, and affecting the most ludicrous imitation of all that was English — in dress, equipage, and livery.

Although my name was not unknown to him, he received me with the condescending courtesy the diplomatist usually assumes in his intercourse with the soldier — protested his regret that the gay season was over — that Naples was thinning every day — that he hardly knew where, or to whom, to present me.

I assured him that pleasure was not among the ambitions *of an invalid like* myself; but next to the care of my health,

one of my objects in Naples was to press a claim upon the Spanish Government, to which the residence of a Spanish Minister of high rank at that court gave a favourable opportunity; and with this preface I gave a brief history of my loss and imprisonment. The young Chargé d'Affaires looked horridly bored by my story, of which it was clear he only heard a very small part; and when I concluded, he made a few notes of my statement, and promised to see the Spanish Ambassador upon it that very day.

I believe that my experience is not a singular one; but from the moment that I announced myself as a person claiming the aid of the "Mission," the doors of the Embassy were hermetically sealed against me. If I called, "His Excellency" (everything is Excellency to an embassy porter) was either in conference with a colleague, or replying to a despatch, or with the court. If I wrote, my answer was always a polite acknowledgment of my note, and no more. Even when we met passingly in the street, his salute was cold, and markedly distant; so that I began to suspect that either he had heard something to my disadvantage among his colleagues, or that he had received some hint respecting me.

I knew if I were to address the Duc de St. Cloud on the subject, that my essenced friend would at once receive a check, and possibly a heavy reprimand; but I was too proud to descend to this, and resolved to right myself without calling in the aid of others. With this intention I repaired one day to the Mission, and having waited for some time, till I saw a person leave the cabinet, from whom I learned that the Envoy was at home, I advanced to the door. "Out, sir," said the porter, barring the way. I pushed him aside, with the air of one who was not to be trifled with, and opening the door, walked in.

Whether it was that the suddenness of my appearance unmanned him, or that something in my manner showed there was no time for further deception, he arose to receive me, and handed me a chair.

"*I have come,* sir," said I, calmly but resolutely, "to ask,

if in the matter which I entrusted to your hands, any progress has been made, or if I am still to be the patient recipient of notes which tell me nothing?"

"What, if there be nothing to tell, sir!" said the young diplomatist, now recovering his self-possession, and standing with his back to the fire, in the very easiest of attitudes.

"I will beg of you to be more explicit," said I.

"You shall not have to complain of me on that score, sir," said he, with a most affected air of courtesy; "and, as brevity is the very essence of clearness, I may as well state, that on representing the case of El Condé de Cregano to the minister of Spain, he very gravely assured me that I was inventing a personage, for that no such name existed among the nobility of his land. The dignity may be recognised in Mexico," added he, "but the Mexican minister is equally perverse, and disclaims having so much as heard of you. I spoke of your wealth, and great treasures, and they actually were rude enough to laugh — not at you, sir — don't be angry — but at *me*. The Spanish ambassador, indeed, said that nothing was more common than for Carlist agents of inferior station to assume styles and titles which might entitle them to greater consideration if taken prisoner; and that in this wise you might have succeeded to your countship; but that to real rank, he persisted in asserting you had no claim whatever. This you must allow, sir, is awkward."

"For you, certainly, it will prove so," said I, haughtily. "You may rely upon it, sir, that your career as a diplomatist will end where it begun. You have dared to insult one whose slightest word could crush you, did he not feel that such an exercise of influence would be ludicrously disproportioned to the object it was directed against. There, sir, — there is a written statement of my claim, — there a full and explicit demand for reparation; and there, the signature of your master the King, at the foot of it. You cannot be ignorant of the hand, nor can you dare to pretend it is a forgery."

If my insulting language had brought the flush of anger to *his cheek, this* "damning proof" completely overcame all

his presence of mind, and left him in a state of confusion and perplexity that any one, save myself, must have pitied.

"The writing is certainly in the King's hand," said he, "and therefore I am obliged to concede the fact, that your claim possesses features I was not previously aware of; with your leave, then, I will lay this document before the Spanish minister" —

"You shall do no such thing, sir," said I, haughtily; "my asserted right is just what it was before I showed you that paper: nor shall I stoop to any corroborative testimony of my claim, even from the hand of royalty;" and with this impertinent speech, I advanced towards the grate, and thrust the paper into the fire, pressing it down into the blaze with my foot, and watching till I saw it consumed.

The diplomatist watched me narrowly throughout this brief proceeding, and I half feared that he had seen through my stratagem, as he said, "Well, Count, as not a shadow of doubt can exist now as to the authentic character of your demand, the best course will be, to have a personal interview with the Spanish ambassador. He 'receives' this evening at his palace, and, with your leave, we will wait upon him together. Of course the time and place will not admit of any discussion of this claim: but you can be presented, — a necessary preliminary to the intercourse that will follow."

This all looked marvellously like a trap; but as any doubt or indecision now would be ruin, I affected to be much pleased with the proposal, and we parted.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Soirée in the "Great World."

It was not without considerable trepidation and great misgiving, that I awaited the evening. What subtilty might be in store for me, I could not guess; but it seemed clear that the young secretary meditated a heavy vengeance upon me, and would not lightly pardon the insult I had passed upon him.

"I have it," thought I, after long and deep pondering; "his plan is to introduce me into a great and crowded assembly, with ministers, ambassadors, and generals, and then, in the face of a distinguished company, to proclaim me a cheat and impostor. He has, doubtless, the train all laid, only waiting for the match; and as the outrage will be inflicted conjointly and diplomatically, any demand for personal satisfaction will be vain; while a very slight hint at the Prefecture would suffice to have me expelled from the country."

Should I confront this danger, or hazard the risk of such an exposure; or should I suffer judgment to be given against me by default? What a trying alternative! In the one case, a peril the greater for its shadowy ill-defined consequences; in the other, certain and irretrievable disgrace! How often did I curse my ambitious yearning after wealth, that had not left me contented with my own fortune; the hard-won, but incontestable rewards of personal distinction. As the gallant officer who had gained each step upon the field of battle, and whose services had claimed the especial notice of his prince, I ought to have rested satisfied.

My promotion would have been certain and rapid, and *what higher* condition should I dare to aspire to than the *command of a* French regiment, or possibly some brilliant staff

ıpointment! Why will not men look downward as they climb e monntain of life, and see the humble abyss from which ey have issued? Were they but to do so, how many would convinced that they had done enough, and not risk all by ·iving to mount higher! The son of the poor peasant a Gen- al of Division! — one among that decorated group sur- unding the sovereign of a great nation! was not this suffi- ent, and so much assuredly was within my reach, merely by ıgth of life, and the ordinary routine of events! and yet all is must I jeopardize for the sake of gold. And now what urse should I adopt? My whole philosophy through life d been comprised in that one word which summed up all arshal Blucher's "tactics," — "Forwards!" It had sufficed r me in many a trying emergency, — it had cut the black ıot of many a tangle; — should I not still abide by it? Of urse. This was not the moment to abandon the bold licy.

From the "host of mine inn" I learned that the Spanish inister, whose receptions were little less splendid than those the court itself, occupied a position which in countries of ore rigid morality, would have left his salons less crowded. fact it was asserted that he owed his eminent station to his ving consented to marry a lady, who had once been the rival royalty itself in Spain, and whose banishment had been us secured. Being still in the full pride of her beauty, and ssessing great wealth, the "scandal" only added to her ıim, in a society where notoriety of any kind is regarded as listinction.

She was the reigning belle of the capital. Her word was w on every theme of fashion and taste; her opinions exerted considerable influence on matters of high political bearing; d despite the ambiguity of her position, she was the arbitress every claim to admission into that society which arrogated itself the name of being "the best."

It is needless to say that a station of the kind engenders a ecies *of tyranny* to which the world responds by inventing *manner of stories* and strange histories; and thus the Mar-

chesa de la Norada was by some proclaimed a natural daughter of the Emperor Napoleon, — by others, of an English Royal Duke. She was a widow, and the wife of half-a-dozen personages together. There was not an European court into which she had not brought discord, — not a cabinet where she had not sown intrigue. Her beauty had seduced, her gold corrupted, and her wiles entrapped, half the great statesmen of the age; while there was scarcely a crime within the red catalogue of the law, that was not laid to her charge; and yet, with all these allegations against her, she was more sovereign in that capital than the rightful queen of the land. This was the presence into which I was to be introduced to-night, and — I frankly own it, — I would have rather confronted the searching scrutiny of the most penetrating of men, than meet the careless, half-bestowed glances of that woman! nor was it at all unlikely that to such a test they wished now to subject me and my pretensions.

It is far easier for many men to confront a personal danger, the peril of life or limb, than to meet the trying difficulty of a slight before the world. To myself the former would be as nothing in comparison. I could face any amount of peril in preference to the risk of a public mark of depreciation, and from a woman, too! where redress was as impossible, as reply was useless.

It was already midnight ere I could muster courage to set out, — not that the hour was inappropriate, for the Marchesa's receptions only began when the opera was over. As I drove along the Chiaia, the crowd of carriages told that this was a night of more than ordinary attraction, and more than one equipage of the Court passed by, showing that some members of the royal family would be present. This again terrified me. Was royalty to be among the witnesses of my shame? When a man's thoughts do take the turn of self-tormenting, what ingenuity will they not exhibit, — what astonishing resources of *annoyance*! I am convinced that my greatest enemy in life *could never* have inflicted a tenth part of that suffering which *now I experienced* from my own fancies! Among the thoughts

which crossed my mind, one kept continually recurring, and made an impression that my memory will probably never lose, —it was my doubt whether I ought not to return and exchange my uniform for plain clothes, and thus avoid exposing the epaulette of a French officer, and the proud cordon I wore, to the chances of open insult.

This question was yet unsolved in my mind, as I drove into the court-yard of the palace. The turmoil and confusion of the scene — carriages interlocked, poles smashing panels, and horses rearing — was an actual relief to me, and I would have felt a heart-warm gratitude for any accident that might have upset half the company, and broken up the reception in disorder. Such "good-luck" was, however, not in store for me. My calèche at length drew up at the door, and I handed my card with my name to the major domo, who stood at the top of the stairs with an army of liveried lacquais around him. "Le Comte de Creganne!" resounded now through the spacious antichamber, and the voices of others took it up, and the echo without repeated it, every syllable falling upon my heart like the bang of a death-bell!

Although our progress was soon arrested by the dense crowd, and all chance of moving further, for a time at least, out of the question, the lacquey continued to call my name aloud, with what I deemed a most needless importunity of announcement. At last he ceased, leaving me to the enjoyment of a momentary tranquillity in mixing with the crowd. It was indeed but momentary; for the young attaché had made his way through the throng, and whispered in my ear, "Let us retire this way, and I'll lead you by another passage, otherwise you will run a great risk of never being presented to the Marchesa." I could have told him that I would have borne even this misfortune like a man, but I did not, and merely followed him as he led the way through a suite of rooms, of which only one was occupied, and that by a card-party.

The buzz and hum of voices apprised me that we were *again approaching* the company, and suddenly, on opening a

door we found ourselves in a small but gorgeously-furnished chamber, where three or four ladies and about a dozen men were assembled, while the main body of the guests passed through in defile, each stopping to salute and say a few words to a lady, who did the honours of the reception. As her back was towards me, I could only mark that she was tall, and of an air that was queenly in state and dignity. The stars and decorations around her showed that some of the party were princes of the blood, and others, ambassadors and ministers of state.

"Wait where you are," whispered my companion; and he moved forward and entered the crowd. I stood an eager spectator of the scene, in which, despite all my anxieties, I could not but feel interested. It was the first great review I had ever witnessed of that fashionable world, whose recognition and acceptance I so ardently coveted. Its slightest gestures, its least and most insignificant observances, were all matters of study to me. Every deep reverence, each motion of respectful courtesy, were things to mark and imitate, and I was storing up many a hint for future guidance, when I observed that a gentleman, whom I had rightly conjectured to be a royal prince, appeared to press some remark upon the "Marchesa," to which at last she replied, "I believe I must follow your Royal Highness's counsel, and take a few minutes' rest;" and so saying, she dropped back from the group, and retired within a few paces of where I stood.

"May I beg you to hand that chair, sir," said the Prince to me, and in a tone in which I own a certain haughtiness seemed to rebuke my want of thoughtfulness in not presenting it unbidden. I hastened to perform this service. The lady turned to acknowledge it; our eyes met, and we stood fixed and rooted to the spot, each speechless and pale with emotion. In those few seconds I felt as if I had lived years.

"La Señhora Dias," murmured I unconsciously to myself. *"Lupo!"* ejaculated she, as if in answer, and she trembled *from head to foot.*

"You have really over-exerted yourself," said the prince, as taking her hand he pressed her down into a seat.

Her eyes never quitted me for an instant, and the expression of her feature became almost that of agonizing pain as she motioned me to approach her. "Is it possible that I see before me my old friend the Duke of —?" She stopped, and with a look of entreaty I can never forget, intimated that I should fill up the blank.

"Le Comte de Creganne, Madame," said I, coming to the rescue, "who is but too happy to find himself remembered by the Marchesa de la Norada."

"Very true, Comte; I was confounding you with your constant companion the Duke de la Breanza; I hope he is well, and the dear duchess — and you — when did you arrive from the Brazils? I trust very lately, or you have treated me shamefully."

Rapidly as these words were uttered, they were enough to give me the "consigne" of what rank my intimate friends held, in what class we met, and from whence I came. While I replied to her questions, she motioned me to a seat beside her, and with a smile and a courteous apology to the prince for devoting herself to the old friend who had so unexpectedly presented himself, she dropped her voice to a whisper, and said, "Not now, nor here, but to-morrow we will speak together."

"Enough," said I, rapidly; "I am your old and esteemed friend the Comte de Creganne; you are not compromised in calling me so."

"Nor can your memory fail to recal me as a Lady of Honour at the Brazilian court!"

And now some of the company had gathered around us, to most of whom she presented me, always adding some few courteous expressions, indicative of our ancient friendship, and of the pleasure she felt at our unexpected meeting. If I have occasionally given way to those erratic flights of fancy which led me to believe myself a scion of a noble house, *well born and nurtured*, with wealth at my command and a high

station in store, all these delusions were nothing to the creative efforts of *her* imagination, who commenced by reminding me of a hundred people who never existed, and places and incidents which were all as unreal. How we did bewail the death of some, rejoice over the good fortune of other "dear, dear friends," who had never breathed! and with what pleasant laughter we remembered eccentricities and oddities that once used to amuse us so much!

Never can I forget the look of astonishment of the young attaché as he came up and found me seated on the ottoman beside the Marchesa, with her pet spaniel upon my lap, while my whole air was redolent of that triumphant expression so unmistakably denoting security.

"I perceive," said he, with difficulty repressing his ill-humour, "that Madame la Marchesa is acquainted with the Comte de Creganne."

"For many years, sir, the Comte and I have known each other, and I have only to own my surprise that none of my friends at Naples ever mentioned to me the arrival of one in every way so distinguished — but here is the Marquese; I must present you, Comte;" so saying, she introduced me to a tall, pompous-looking, elderly gentleman, who, it is but fair to add, did not evince half so much satisfaction at sight of me as his wife showed. And now was I the lion of the evening. I, who had walked the Chiaia every day for weeks back without notice or recognition, and who might — had the idea occurred to me — have fallen down and died without one to pity me — I became all of a sudden a most "interesting personage!" My African campaign was exalted into a perfect career of glory, and even *my* modesty was pushed hard to accept the praises most lavishly bestowed upon acts of heroism of which I had not even heard.

The Duke of Vallabretta, the younger brother of the king, was certain he had often heard of me from his "friend De St. Cloud." He was quite positive that I was the officer of *dragoons who,* with one squadron of horse, captured "a *Smala" defended* by twelve hundred Arabs, while fully one-

half of the illustrious cruelties of the Oran war was generously laid to my charge. A dash of atrocity adds immensely to the charm of heroism in Italian estimation; and so I discovered that various acts of roasting prisoners, sending a cargo of noses to Toulon, and such like, were exceedingly popular with the ladies, who regarded me as a modern "Bayard."

Not all these sensations of triumph, however, gave me one-half the pleasure that I felt in trampling upon the little French attaché, whom I persecuted with a proud disdain that nearly drove him mad. All my ignorance of Neapolitan society, the obscurity in which I had lived hitherto, I laid at his door. I deplored most feelingly to the prince the inefficient mode in which we were represented at his Court, and promised to use my influence in effecting a change. I fear my disposition is not so angelic as I usually conceive it, for I actually taxed my ingenuity for little subjects of attack against the unlucky diplomatist, and saw him at length retire from the salons, crushed, crest-fallen, and miserable.

Another consideration, perhaps, added venom to my malignity; I knew not how short-lived might be my power, and determined to "make my running while the course was free." The vicissitudes of fortune had often reversed in one short day all the prospect I trusted to be the most stable and certain; and for the future I was fully resolved never to forego the stroke to-day, for which my arm might be too weak to-morrow. As I saw him depart, I felt like a naval hero when his enemy has struck, and in the pride of victory abandoned myself to pleasure.

If the Marchesa watched me at first with an uneasy and anxious eye, doubtful, perhaps, how I should acquit myself in that high and polished world, I soon saw that her fears were allayed as she saw the easy quietude of my manner, and that tranquil self-possession which is supposed to be only acquired by long admixture with the world of fashion. It was evident, too, that if any failure on my part would entail disgrace, success was just as certain to do her honour and credit, since I *was a strong* rebutting evidence against all those who denied

that the Marchesa was ever known or recognised before in the high circles of a court.

"To-morrow, at noon," said she, as I made my bow at parting; and it was not likely I should forget the appointment.

It was with very different feelings I drove up to the palace of the Marchesa on the day following, from those I had experienced on approaching it on the evening of the reception; nor was I long without perceiving that my confidence was well founded. The Groom of the Chambers received me with his most bland courtesy, and by his manner showed that he expected my arrival.

Preceding me through a suite of rooms whose magnificence I had not time to observe on the previous evening, he ushered me into a small chamber leading into a conservatory, from which the view extended over the wide Bay of Naples, and presented Vesuvius from base to summit. As I was left by myself here for some minutes, I had leisure to notice the varied elegance by which I was surrounded. Rare plants and flowers, in jars of costly porcelain; alabaster statues and rich bronzes, appeared amid the clustering foliage; and in the midst of all, two tiny swans, of the rare breed of Morocco, lay tranquilly in a little basin, whose water spouted from a silver fountain of most elaborate workmanship.

While yet gazing on the tasteful objects around, the Marchesa had entered, and so noiselessly, that she was at my side ere I knew it. Paler than on the previous evening, she looked even handsomer: but in the sunken eye and the wearied expression of the mouth, I could see that she had passed a sleepless night.

Having taken a seat upon a sofa, and motioned me to seat myself beside her, she looked fixedly at me for several minutes without a word: at last, and in a voice of deep feeling, she said, "Do you remember the pledge with which we *parted? do you* recollect the oath by which you bound your*self?*"

"Perfectly, Señhora!" said I; "nor was I aware yesterday, till the very moment of our meeting, in whose presence I was standing."

"But you had heard of me here?"

"Only as the Marchesa de la Norada — not as the Señhora."

"Hush! let that name never escape your lips; I believe you and trust you. The commission I gave you was well and faithfully executed: were it otherwise, and did I deem you false, it would not be difficult for me to rid myself of the embarrassment. We live in a city where such things are well understood." My blood ran cold at this threat, for I remembered the accusation which hung over her in Mexico: she saw what was passing in my mind, and added, "You have nothing to fear; we shall be good friends while you remain here; but that time must be brief. I cannot, I will not, live a life of terror; a moment of impatience, an unguarded word, a hasty expression of yours might compromise me, and then — When can you leave Naples?"

"To-morrow — to-day, if you desire it."

"That would be too hurried," said she, thoughtfully. "We must not encourage suspicion. Why are you here?"

I gave the restoration of my health as the reason, and then alluded to the circumstances of my Spanish claim, which I had hoped Naples would have proved a suitable place for pressing.

"Who knows of this transaction? what evidence have you of its truth?" said she, hurriedly.

"The minister by whose order I was imprisoned, the Governor of Malaga, his official underlings, all know of it."

"Enough. Now, by whom was the information given on which you were arrested?"

"A man who called himself the Consul at Campecho, and to whose early history I am disposed to suspect I have the clue; but to whom, unfortunately, in a hasty moment, I *betrayed that* secret knowledge."

"And thus he dreads and hates you," said she, fixing her dark eyes sternly on me.

"He rather fears me without reason," said I.

"But still you would have traded on that fear had it served your purpose?" reiterated she, with a pointedness that showed how the application to her own case was uppermost in her thoughts.

"You are less than just to me, Señhora!" said I, proudly. "A variety of circumstances led me to connect this man with a very unhappy incident which took place years ago in England, and wherein his conduct — supposing him to be the same — was base to the last degree. This suspicion I was weak enough to let escape me. His enmity was the consequence, and from it followed all the misfortunes I have suffered."

"Was he a murderer?"

"No — not that."

"Nor a forger? for methinks in English esteem such is the parallel offence."

"In the case I speak of forgery was the least of his crimes, — he seduced the wife of his friend and benefactor."

"Oh, the wretch!" exclaimed she, with a derisive smile, that gave her features — beautiful as they were — an almost demoniac expression. "I trust he never prospered after such iniquity."

Not heeding the tone of sneer in which she uttered this, I replied, "You are right, Señhora; he lived a life of terror and misery. He was a coward; and the man he had injured never ceased to track him from country to country. Over sea and land he followed him; the thirst for vengeance stimulating a heart dead to every other emotion. Accident, when I was a mere boy, brought me into close relation with poor Broughton."

"With whom?" said she, grasping my wrist, while her eyes strained till the very blood started in them.

"*Sir Dudley* Broughton," said I; but the words were not *out ere she fell* senseless on the floor. I raised her and placed

her on a sofa; and then dipping her handkerchief in the fountain, bathed her temples and her lips. But she gave no sign of returning animation; her arms dropped powerless at either side. She did not even seem to breathe. What was I to do? I knew not where to find a bell to summon the servants, even should I dare to leave her. In my excitement I believed that she was dead, and that I had killed her; and then there darted through my brain the terrible conviction that this could be no other than Lady Broughton herself — the unhappy Lydia Delmar. With a long-drawn sigh she at length awoke, and, opening her eyes, looked up at me. A convulsive shudder speedily followed, and she closed them again, and, remained still, with her hands clasped tightly over her heart.

"Have I been dreaming a terrible dream," said she at last, in a weak and broken voice, "or are my dreadful thoughts realities. Tell me, of what were we speaking?"

I did not answer. I could not tell her of the sad theme, nor did I dare to deceive her. In this dilemma I became silent; but my confusion did not escape her, and with a voice, every syllable of which struck deep into my heart, she said, "Is this secret your own, or have you ever revealed it to another?"

"I have never told it, nor indeed, till now, was the full mystery known to myself."

These few words, which served to confirm her own wavering terrors, at the same time that they showed how she herself had betrayed her dreadful secret, increased her suffering, and for a space she seemed overwhelmed by affliction.

"Let us speak of this no more," said she at last, in the same hurried voice which once before had made me suspect the soundness of her intellect. "I cannot, I dare not, trust myself to dwell upon this theme; nor will I suffer any one to usurp an ascendency over me from terror. No, sir; you shall not deceive yourself by such a delusion. I have friends, great and powerful friends, who will protect me. I have money, and can buy the aid that outstrips patronage. Beware, then, *how you threaten* me!"

"You are unjust to me, lady," said I, calmly, but resolutely. "I never meant to threaten. A mere accident has put me in possession of a secret which, while you live, none shall ever hear from my lips; nor need you fear any allusion to it will ever escape me, to yourself."

"Then let us part. Let us see each other no more," said she, rising, and approaching a small ivory cabinet, which she unlocked. "See, here is enough to satisfy the desire for mere money, if your heart be so set upon wealth that it has no other idol. Take these, and these, and these. They are gems of price, and taken from a royal crown. That necklace of rubies once graced the shoulders of an empress; and here are rings, whose value will buy long years of dissipation and excess."

"I must interrupt you, Señhora," said I, offended at the tone she assumed towards me. "There is no need to 'buy me off;' I am ready to take my leave — to quit Naples within an hour — and I pledge myself that we shall never meet again, or if we do, as utter strangers to each other."

"These were the terms of our contract once before," said she, fixing her gaze steadfastly on me.

"And by whom broken, and how?" said I.

"True — too true!" exclaimed she, in a voice of deep emotion. "Fate that did this, has doubtless other punishments in store for me! It is plain, then, that I must trust you — I, who can feel confidence in none!"

"I do not seek for it, Señhora," replied I; "my offer is to leave this city, where already I see but little prospect of urging my suit with success. Why should we meet again in life, when both of us are travelling opposite roads?"

"This suit of yours is, then, a real demand, founded upon an actual loss, — matter of fact throughout?" This, although said in these few words, had nothing offensive in its tone, and I replied by an assurance of my good faith and veracity.

"Send me the memorial this evening; to morrow, or the *day after at farthest*, you shall have an answer. As for your *demand upon the* Havana, the banker is my own, and I can

answer for your being honourably dealt with; all your property in his keeping, I will guarantee."

"If that be so, Señhora, I am indifferent about the Spanish minister's reply; I shall have wealth more than enough for all my desires without him."

"How do you call yourself in these papers?" asked she, hurriedly.

"El Condé de Cregano."

"And you were known by that title in Mexico?"

"Certainly; I have no other."

She stared at me fixedly for a minute or two, and then muttered to herself, "By what pretension should *I* question HIS rank!" then turning to me, said, "Señhor el Condé de Cregano, I receive the world at large, every evening save Saturday; that night I reserve for my friends. Come as often as you can during the week, but never omit a Saturday; visit me at the opera frequently; speak to me always when we meet in public places; be my intimate friend, in fact, but not more — you have too much tact to be my admirer." With this she gave me her hand, which I pressed respectfully to my lips, and bowing deeply, moved towards the door.

"We understand each other," said she, calmly.

"Perfectly, madame," replied I.

"Then never say, sir," resumed she, in a stern, determined voice, "never say that you are not an adventurer; never dare to tell me that one who so quickly assumes a part is not a professed actor on the great boards of life — ready to take the character assigned him, be it broad farce or comedy — ay, or even tragedy, if needs were. Do not deny or seek to contradict me; I did not care that your countship had fourteen quarterings behind it, — nay, I like you even better as you are. There, now you look natural and at your ease. Adieu, Monsieur Le Comte."

"Adieu, Madame La Marquise," said I, putting as much irony into my accent as might repay her, and then we parted. Whatever her feelings, I know not; mine, I own, were *scarcely of the* pleasantest; prompting me to make my

residence at Naples as brief as might be, and to see no mo of my "dear friend of former years" than was absolutely i dispensable.

Were I to dwell upon those portions of my history whic afforded me the highest amount of enjoyment, while passi I might linger upon the weeks I spent in Naples, as perha the very pleasantest of my life. The world of fashion w new to me. All those fascinations to which habit renders m either apathetic or indifferent, came fresh upon *me*. The ou ward show of splendour in dress and jewels, gorgeous saloon rare flowers, exquisite pictures and statues, soon cease astonish and amaze; but it takes a long while ere the char of intercourse with really brilliant society begins to wear of and ere a man recognises a degree of sameness in the pleasur and amusements of his fashionable friends.

I am not sure that the society which I frequented had n more power of captivation than a more rigidly scrupulo circle; since, while exacting all the observances of polishe life, it yet admitted a degree of liberty, almost of familiarit among its members, that I have remarked is not common the wider intercourse of the world.

Pretty women were not ashamed to look their best, an dress the most becomingly; witty men were not chary of the smartness; courtiers were confidential; statesmen we candid; men of the world unbent, as if in a circle where the freedom would not be misinterpreted, and said a hundre things that in other societies would have been, to say t least, indiscreet. It is true that individuals were more di cussed than events, and that characters, not facts, forme the staple of the talk: but how amusing was it — what stor of anecdote were opened; what strange histories, and curio illustrations of life unfolded. Pretension was ridiculed, vu garity exposed, stupidity laughed at, awkwardness criticise and want of tact condemned with most unsparing ridicul *but, I am bound to* own, that there were few commendatio *reserved for virtuous* conduct or honourable action. T

debtor side of the account was full, but the credit had not an item on it!

No rank, however exalted, could escape the judgments of a "set," who, with all the exclusiveness of fashion, affected a most democratic spirit of equality. It was, however, a "Communism" that assumed to start on the basis of every one having at least ten thousand a-year — not so bad a theory, were it only practicable.

I must not linger longer on this subject, on which I have only touched to remark, that here it was where I acquired that knowledge of forms and conventionalities which constitute the tactique of life: those "gambits" and "openings," to use a chess phrase, by which you at once obtain an advantage over an equal adversary, and secure yourself against injury with even a superior player. I learned when to use an illustration or a story; when to become a mere listener; how to assist a slow man without his detecting the aid; and how to disclose a discussion with an epigram; and all this without the faintest show of premeditation or the very slightest sign of forethought. While my education as a man of the world was progressing, my material fortune was also advancing. The Spanish ambassador, who had referred my case to his court, ascertained that I had been most infamously treated; that not alone my rank and fortune were indisputable, but that the individual on whose affirmation I was arrested was himself a Carlist spy, and the noted agent of a great Northern power. In fact, so manifold were his infractions against law, in every country in Europe, that the only difficulty was to what particular power to hand him over, so many laying claim to the honour of punishing him. In the end, Naples obtained this distinction! and at the very period I was enjoying the luxurious pleasures of that capital, "my friend, the Consul," was expanding his chest and his faculties in the less captivating career of a galley-slave. "Fortune is just!" said I, as I arranged my cravat at the window which overlooked the Bay, on whose glassy surface some half-dozen boats moved slug-

gishly, as the red and yellow rowers kept time to the "stroke by the clanking of their fetters.

Governments move slowly — particularly when the case i one of refunding a previous spoliation; meanwhile they ad mitted my claim; and by way of keeping me in good-humour they sent me a cross of the order of Isabella, of the first clas — a very gratifying recognition of my noble birth and merits. My intimacy with the Duke of Medina — the brother of the king — obtained for me the Neapolitan order; and thus was I decorated with three very distinguished cordons, which I wore in my button-hole as a "tricolour," — a fact insignificant in itself; but I mention it here, as many of my imitators have since that affected to be the inventors of the method.

Periods of expectancy are generally deemed great trials making inroads upon the health, and sapping the energies of the mind. Such was not my case here; I waited like one who loiters in some delicious garden, surrounded with blooming flowers and sweet odours. The delays and procrastination of cabinets — for which the most profuse apologies were made — I bore with a degree of calm equanimity that won for me the appellation of a most finished gentleman; and thus was almost unconsciously perfecting myself in that grand elemen of breeding whose triumph is "impassiveness."

There were moments when I actually dreaded the termina tion of my cause, so agreeable had Naples become to me; bu as the rich gamester is certain to win, while the poor player i luckless ever, successes crowded on me, because I was half in different to them.

Six months had now nearly elapsed since my arrival a Naples, and I was paying a morning visit to the Marchess whom I was engaged to accompany to a grand *déjeuner*, to b given on board of a British ship of war in the Bay. It was on of those gorgeous days of brilliant colouring, which, in Italy seem to exaggerate the effect of landscape, and defy all effort of art to imitate; the scene was heightened, too, by th *objects moving* across the bay. The various boats, wit

ensigns floating and music playing — the swift "Lateeners" skimming along the glassy surface, almost without a breath of wind — and then the great three-decker herself, in all the pride of her majestic size, with flags of every nation fluttering from her halyards, were splendid adjuncts to the picture.

"Here are three letters for you, Mons. le Comte," said the Marchesa; "they came in the Spanish minister's bag this morning; but I suppose there is nothing sufficiently interesting in them to withdraw your thoughts from that magnificent panorama."

Of course I affected concurrence in the sentiment, and thrust them into my pocket with assumed indifference. The room soon after filled with arriving visitors, and among the rest the Spanish Ambassador.

"Ha, Señhor Condé," said he, approaching me; "let me offer my warmest felicitations. How happy am I to be the means through which your good tidings have reached you!"

I bowed, smiled, and seemed charmed, without the slightest notion wherein lay my good fortune. His practised eye, however, soon detected my game, and he said, "You have received your letters, I hope?"

"Yes," replied I, carelessly; "the Marchesa has been kind enough to give them to me."

"And you have read them?" asked he again.

"Not yet," said I; "I make it a rule never to risk the pleasure of a happy day by opening a letter at hazard."

"What if its contents were but to increase the enjoyment; what if the tidings were to fill up the very measure of your wishes, Señhor?"

"In that case," rejoined I, as coldly as before, "they will be very acceptable to-morrow morning; and thus I shall have gained two days of happiness, *vice* one."

"Admirable philosophy, indeed," said he. "Still I must be pardoned for interfering with its exercise. I shall therefore take *upon me to inform* the honourable company that her *Majesty, my royal* mistress, has named the Count de Cre-

gano, a Grand Cordon of the Fleece, in consideration of his distinguished services in arranging the Mexican debt; that all his property, taken from him under a false and traitorous imputation, shall be at once restored; that any additional recompense he may demand for his imprisonment and other inconveniences incurred, shall be immediately accorded; and that all envoys and ministers of the Court of Spain are instructed to receive the Count de Cregano with every honour and distinction, affording him every protection, and facilitating him in the prosecution of any project in which he may be interested."

This speech, delivered in a very imposing manner, was followed by a round of felicitation from the assembled company, the Marchesa offering me her hand in congratulation, and whispering the words, "How soon?"

"To-morrow, if I must," replied I, sorrowfully.

"To-morrow be it," said she, and turned away hastily.

The information conveyed to me by the ambassador was what formed the substance of two of the letters: the third I contrived to peep into unobserved, was a formal notification from the Havana that my bills for the amount in the bankers hands would be accepted and negotiated at a well-known house in Paris. Thus, then, and in one moment, was I once more rich — the possessor of immense wealth, and not alone of mere fortune, but of all the honours and dignities which can grace and adorn it. Of course I became the hero of the day. To me was entrusted the arm of the Marchesa as we descended to the pier; to me was accorded the seat of honour beside her in the boat. All the pleasant flatteries that are reserved for rich men were heaped upon me, and I felt that life had but one prize more with which to fill up the most ambitious of my cravings. That, alas! could never be — Donna Maria was the wife of another; and thus should I learn that complete happiness is never to be the lot of any mere mortal!

The fête on board the *Tariffa* was very splendid; but it *had another* charm still more rarely met with, — I mean the *hearty cordiality* which graces every entertainment when

British sailors are the hosts, their courtesy being blended with an actual warmth of hospitality that wins even upon the coldest guest, and gives a tone of friendliness to the most promiscuous gathering.

Every one appeared to experience the influence of this peculiar magic, and all gave way to the impulse that suggested the fullest enjoyment of the hour.

To waltzes had succeeded the manolo and the bolero; dances of the wild regions of Calabria and Sicily were performed by men of noble birth, the petty princes of those countries; and all were vieing who should introduce something new and unknown to the rest, when, suddenly, the distant sound of the church bells of the city was borne along the water, announcing the "Vinti quatro," as it is called — the hour of evening prayer. In a moment a sudden air of devotional seriousness spread itself over the company, and most bent their heads in pious reverence while they recited to themselves the words of the "Angelus." If there seemed, to the sense of English Protestantism, something strange and unnatural in this great revulsion, there was a degree of earnestness and sincerity in the features of the worshippers that showed their piety to be unfeigned; and here I might leave the theme, were it not for an incident which, taking place at the same moment, will remain for ever associated in my mind with that brief interval of prayer.

The hour of sunset, or, as the Neapolitans term it, the "Vinti quatro," is that in which the galley-slaves, employed from dawn of day at convict labour, return to their prisons; and while the streets at that period exhibit long lines of men whose terrible appearance needs not the heightening accessaries of a shocking dress and a heavy lumbering chain to pronounce them criminals, over the bay are seen boats moving in sad procession, the clanking of the fetters creaking mournfully upon the ear, and sounding like the wail of hopeless captivity.

No scene of pleasurable enjoyment can stand the contrast *of such a sight*; the revulsion is too sudden and too painful

from the light frivolity of mirth to the terrible reality of suffering and sorrow. To escape, therefore, from the gloomy picture, the officers of the vessel endeavoured to withdraw their guests from the deck to the shelter of the cabin. The change was accomplished well and naturally, and we were all gathered between decks in that turmoil and confusion which form no insignificant part of the success of every entertainment; the buzz of talking and the sounds of pleasant laughter were heard on every side — when suddenly a cry was heard above, and then the loud voice of the officer of the watch, commanding a boat to be instantly manned and lowered.

A hundred conjectures at once ran round as to the meaning of the order; but one of the officers hastily entering, a few minutes later, put an end to all guessing, by informing us that a very dreadful incident had just occurred within a short distance from where we lay. "You may have remarked a handsome yacht, which anchored last night in the bay, coming up from the eastward: she belonged to an English gentleman, with whose name we were not acquainted, but whose conduct is calculated to confirm all that Frenchmen are accustomed to say of our national taste for eccentricity even in crime. It would seem that at an early hour this morning he landed at the Mole, and by means of letters with which he was provided to the minister of police, obtained leave to inspect the different prisons of the city, and to pass under the most minute examination all those condemned to the galleys for life. As already all those who work at Castelamare had been sent away, he obtained an order to visit the galleys there, being determined, as it would seem, to leave nothing unseen. On reaching Castelamare it is said that he again commenced his tour of inspection, going over the roll of the prisoners, with the muster-book in his hand, as if to compare their features with the crimes alleged against them, and scrutinizing each with a most searching look. The visit lasted till nigh evening; and although the governor was not a little astonished at the *proceeding* of the stranger, still less was he prepared for the *singular* request which succeeded: it was, that he might be

permitted to return to Naples in one of the convict boats instead of in his own gig. The demand might have been treated lightly, or altogether refused, but that the Englishman's appearance and manner indicated rank, while the letter he carried from the minister showed him to be one with claims for consideration. The governor, therefore, gave the permission, smiling at the same time at a caprice which could not have proceeded from the native of any other country.

"The Englishman took his seat in the stern of the boat, and, as I am told by the steersman, never spoke nor moved for nigh an hour's time, muffling himself up in his cloak so that his very face was concealed; he neither cast his eyes over the bay nor looked towards the shore, but sat like one in deep reflection. As we neared the *Tariffa*," said my informant, "our passenger affected to feel cold and chilly — he might have been so, since the evening breeze was just springing up, — and said that he would like to row for a spell, just to warm himself. The petty-officer in charge explained that the request could not be complied with, since, amongst other reasons, the men were chained two and two on every bench, and then obliged to tug at the same oar.

"The Englishman, who, throughout the day, had invariably overruled every objection opposed to him, grew only more positive in his demand, and at last produced the minister's order to strengthen his proposal; and finally said, that as he had obtained the permission to learn all he could of the condition of the convicts, he was determined not to depart without experiencing in his own person the amount of labour exacted from them. 'You shall chain me to that fellow in the bow of the boat,' said he, 'for I have my doubts that this same punishment is not equal to what our own sailors perform every day, as a mere duty.'

"I need not dwell upon the arguments he used, and the reason he pressed; and although I have not heard it, I have little doubt that bribery was among the rest. His demand was granted, and he was actually placed beside the convict,

and his left wrist inclosed in the same fetter with the other's right.

"His face became almost purple as he grasped the oar, and his eyes glared fiercely round upon his fellow-labourer, like the red and staring orbs of a wild beast. 'So dreadful was the expression of his face,' said the steersman, 'that I believed him to be insane: and a shocking fear of evil consequences shot through me for having yielded to him.'

"I at once called out to the crew to ship their oars, determining to make him resume his place beside me. The order was obeyed by the bow-oar as by the rest. I was then about to issue a command for him to be released, when, with a yell that I shall never forget, he sprang up in the boat, and then calling out something in English, which I could not understand, he seized his comrade by the throat and shook him violently.

"The convict — himself a strong man, yet in the prime of life — seemed nothing in the grasp of the other, who held him at arm's length, as though he were a child; and then letting go his hold, clasping him round the waist, with both arms, he jumped into the sea.'

"They were seen in mortal conflict for a second or two as they sank in the clear water, but they never rose to the surface, — the weight of the massive fetters and their own struggles soon finished their sufferings!"

Such was the terrible story which now broke in upon the gay current of our festivity, and threw a gloom over a scene of brilliant pleasure. Of course various surmises as to the motive of this fearful act were uttered, but they all tended to the conclusion that it proceeded from insanity, which occasionally displays amongst its wonderful phenomena all the premeditation and circumspection of accomplished guilt.

There is that of solemnity about an event of this nature that even frivolity itself stands rebuked by, and so, now, instead of resuming the occupations of pleasure, many took *their leave* suddenly; and of those who still remained, but

one topic engrossed the conversation — that of madness as an element in all great cases of guilt.

Of course, as in all similar discussions, the superiority lay with those who, with more readiness of expression, also possessed greater resources in anecdote and illustration, and of these the greater number were disposed to believe that all great criminality is allied with deranged intellect. The Marchesa, however, took the opposite side, and insisted that the passion which prompted to the most terrible and appalling acts, was perfectly consistent with right reason and sound judgment.

"It is too rash in us," said she, "to assume a mere blind impulse in cases even where recognised insanity exists. Were we to know the secrets of the human heart, we might, perhaps, see a long-cherished purpose in acts which appear to be dictated by momentary passion. These impulses may be excessive, ill-directed, and ill-judging; but still they may have their origin in some train of thought where generous feelings and noble aspirations mingle. Witness those heroic — for they are, after all, heroic — assassinations of the student Sand and Charlotte Corday. What a perfect abrogation of self did these acts evince; what consummate devotion to a cause! Deeply as we may condemn the horrid nature of the crime, it would be a great error to class these men with vulgar criminals, or deny to them — the motives at least — of something great."

I am not able — were I even disposed — to repeat all the ingenious arguments by which the Marchesa supported her opinion, nor the instances she so readily adduced in support of it. She became highly excited by the theme, and soon, by the eloquence of her words, and the fascinations of her manner, enchained the whole company in a mute attention around her.

It was just as she concluded a very animated and glowing description of that condition of the human mind, when by a volcanic effort, as it were, the long-buried flames burst forth, *to scatter* ruin and destruction on every side, that a young

officer entered the cabin, and stood fascinated by the powers of her fervid eloquence.

"Well, Mr. Hardy," said the Captain, recalling the youth's attention to duty, "have you been on board of her?"

"Yes, sir, she is an English yacht, the *Firefly*, and her late owner was an English baronet, whose name I have written down in my pocket-book."

The Captain took the note-book from the young officer's hand, and, after reading the name, said, "If I mistake not, this is the same person that once was so well known in London life. Most of the present company must have heard of the rich and eccentric Sir Dudley Broughton."

A low groan broke from me, and I turned my eyes slowly and stealthily towards the end of the table, where the Marchesa sat. Not a word, not the faintest sound had issued from her lips; but she sat still and motionless, her lips slightly parted, and her eyes staring straight before her. The pallor of her features was that of death itself; and, indeed, the rigid contour of the cheeks, and the firm tension of the muscles, gave no evidence of life.

"You are ill, Madam la Marchesa," said a gentleman who sat beside her; but, as she made no reply, several now turned towards her, to press their attentions, and suggest advice. She never spoke; indeed, she seemed not to hear them, but sat with her head erect, and her arms rigidly stretched out on either side, motionless as a statue.

The shocking incident that had occurred, and the discussion which followed it, were sufficient to account for this sudden attack in one whose nervous temperament was so finely strung; but as she showed no signs of recovering consciousness, nor gave the slightest indication of rallying, it was decided at once that she should be conveyed to shore, where in her own house medical aid might be had recourse to.

I was one of those who assisted to carry her to the boat, *and sat beside* her afterwards, and held her hand in mine, *but she never* recognised me; her hand, too, was cold and

clammy, and the fingers felt rigid and cramped. The stern impressive look of her features, the cold stare of her fixed eyes, were terrible to behold; far more so than even the workings of mere bodily sufferings.

During the passage to the shore, at the landing itself, and on our way to the Palazzo, she remained in the same state, nor did she ever evince any trait of consciousness till she reached the foot of the great staircase, where a crowd of servants, in the richest liveries, awaited to offer their services. Then suddenly she moved her head from side to side, regarding the crowd with a glance of wild and terrific meaning; she raised her hand to her brow, and passed it slowly across her forehead. For an instant it seemed as if the lethargic paroxysm was about to pass away, for her features softened into a look of calm but melancholy beauty. This, too, glided away, and her mouth settled into a hard and rigid smile. It was the last change of all — for she had become an IDIOT!

From that hour forth she never spoke again; she never knew those about her, neither missing them while absent nor recognising them when they reappeared. She had none of the childish wilfulness of others in her sad condition, nor did she show the likings and dislikings they usually manifest; and thus she lingered on to her death.

Of her secret I was the sole depository — and from that hour to this in which I write, it has never escaped my lips.

CHAPTER XIV.

Conclusion.

I HAD few inducements to prolong my stay at Naples. The society in which I moved had received a shock so terrible that for some time, at least, it could not hope to recover, and an air of gloom and despondency prevailed, where so lately all had worn the livery of pleasure.

I made my farewell visit, therefore, at the court, and the various embassies, and set out for Paris. This time, grown wiser by experience, I did not seek to astonish the world by any gorgeous display of my riches. I travelled with but two carriages — one of which contained my luggage; the other, a light "coupé," I occupied alone. My route lay through Rome and Florence, across the Apennines to Milan, and thence, by the glorious scenery of the Splügen, into Switzerland; but I saw little of the varied scenes through which I journeyed. My whole thoughts were engaged upon the future.

I had once more won the great prize in the world's lottery, and I never ceased catechising myself in what way I should exercise my power.

From what I had already observed of life the great mistake of rich men seemed to me, their addiction to some one pursuit of pleasure, which gradually gained an undue ascendency over their minds, and exercised, at last, an unwonted degree of tyranny. The passion for play — the love of pictures — the taste for company-seeing — the sports of the field, and so on, ought never to be allowed any paramount place, or used as pursuits; all these things should be simply employed as means *of obtaining* an ascendency over other men, and of exercising *that sway which* is never denied to success.

Some men are your slaves because your cook is unrivalled, or your cellar incomparable: others look up to you because your equipages exhibit an elegance with which none can vie; because your thorough-breds are larger, show more bone, and carry the highest condition. Others, again, revere you for your Vandykes and your Titians — your Rembrandts and Murillos — your illuminated missals — your antique marbles. To every section of society you can exhibit some peculiar and special temptation, which, in their blind admiration, they refer to as an attribute of yourself. Your own fault is it, if they ever discover their error! The triumphs of Raphael and Velasquez shed a reflected light upon him who possesses them; and so of each excellence that wealth can purchase. You stand embodied in the exercise of your taste, and in your own person receive the adulation which greatness and genius have achieved.

To accomplish this, however, requires infinite tact and a great abrogation of self. All individuality must be merged, and a new character created, from the "disjecta membra" of many crafts and callings.

To have any one inordinate passion is to betray a weak spot in one's armour, of which the cunning will soon take advantage. Such were among my meditations as I rolled along towards Paris; and so long as I journeyed alone, with no other companionship than my own thoughts, these opinions appeared sage and well reasoned; but how soon were they routed as I drove into that gorgeous capital, and saw the full tide of its pleasure-loving inhabitants, as it rolled proudly past! How vain to reason further upon the regulation of a life to which wealth set no limits! how impossible to restrain oneself within the barriers of cold prudential thought, where all was to be had for asking.

Ah, Con, your philosophy was excellent, while, sitting in the corner of your coupé, you rolled along unnoticed, save by the vacant stare of some vigneron in a blue cotton night-cap, or some short-legged wench in wooden "sabots;" but, now *that you stand* in the window of your great hotel in the

Place Vendôme, and see the gathering crowd, which inquires — who is the illustrious arrival? your heart begins to beat quicker and fuller; you feel like a great actor, for whom the house is already impatient; nor is the curtain to remain longer down. You are scarcely an hour in Paris when your visitors begin to call. Here are cards without number — officers in high command, courtiers, ministers, and aide-de-camps of those whose rank precludes the first visit. The "place" is like a fair, with its crush of equipages, — the hotel is actually besieged. Every language of Europe is heard within its "porte-cochère," and your own chasseur is overwhelmed with questionings, enough to drive him distracted.

Is it any wonder how the poor man adulates wealth, when those in high station — the great and titled of the earth — are so ready to worship and revere it!

My first care was, of course, to present myself before the prince, my gracious master, and I drove at once to the Tuileries. There was a reception that morning by the King, and the Duc de St. Cloud led me forward, and presented me to his Majesty, with a very eulogistic account of my services in Africa.

The King listened most graciously to the narrative, and then, with a cordial courtesy that at once put me at my ease, asked me several questions about my campaigns, all ingeniously contrived to be complimentary to me.

"Yours is not originally a Spanish family, Count; I fancy the name is Celtic."

"Yes, sire, we came from Ireland," said I, blushing in spite of myself.

"Ah, very true. There was always a great interchange of races between the two nations. And have you never tried to trace back, among your Irish ancestors, so as to learn who are the lineal descendants of your house?"

"I have been hitherto, sire, rather a man of action than of thought or reflection. To obtain possession of a property *belonging to my family*, I undertook a journey to, and a long *residence in Mexico*; and although successful in this, a sub-

sequent misfortune deprived me of all I owned, and left me actually in want. The good fortune which led me to take service under your Majesty, has, however, never deserted me, and I am enabled once again to assume the station that belonged to me."

The King heard me with apparent pleasure, and after a few generalities about Paris and my acquaintances, — "His Royal Highness the Duc de St. Cloud has asked me to appoint you on my personal staff. There is not at the present a vacancy, but you shall be named as an extra aid-de-camp in the mean while."

Overwhelmed by this distinction, I could only bow my gratitude in silence, and, with an air and show of great devotion, I retired from the royal presence. Thus did proper feeling suggest the truest politeness; for had I been more assured, the chances were, I should have endeavoured to say something, and consequently committed a very grievous breach of etiquette.

The following day I received an invitation to dine at Court. The company was numerous, and among them I discovered the young English attaché who had so insolently treated my my demands on my first visit to Paris. With what sovereign contempt did I now look down upon him! He was there, exactly as I left him, muddling away in the petty details of his little routine life, — signing a passport or copying a despatch, — playing off the airs of grand seigneur to couriers and lacquais de place, while in the same time, I had won honours and rewards upon the field of battle, and now stood while the Prince leaned upon my arm, and chatted familiarly over the assembled company. Nothing gave me a more confident sense of my own standing in the world, than the feeling with which I now regarded those whom once I looked up to with a kind of awe. It is precisely as we discover that the hills which, in childhood, we believed to be gigantic mountains, are mere hillocks, that in after life we find out how indescribably small are many of those we used to think of as "*high* and mighty."

I therefore sneered down my poor attaché, and as I passed him, I believe I even suffered my sabre to jar against his leg, not without hoping that he might notice the slight, and seek satisfaction for it. In this I was disappointed, and I left him, never to trouble my head more about him.

Among the pleasures which awaited me in Paris, none gave me more sincere satisfaction than the renewal of my acquaintance with De Minérale, who, however, could never believe that my good fortune was other than some lucky accident of my African campaign.

"Come — out with it," he would say. "You robbed a 'Smala,' — you pillaged a 'Deira,' or something of the sort. Tell me frankly how it was, and on my honour I'll never print it till you're dead and gone. In fact, if you persist in refusing, I'll give you to the world with name in full. I'll describe you as a fellow that picked up a treasure in some small island of the Mediterranean, and turned millionaire after being a pirate!"

"Put me down for fifty copies of the book," said I, laughing; "I'm rich enough now to encourage the small-fry of literature."

Thus did we often jest with each other, and we met continually; for when not invited out myself, I gave entertainments at home, at which I assembled various members of that artistic set in which I had once moved — a very different order of society from that in which I mixed in Naples — and I am free to own, with far less claim to real agreeability. The "wits by profession" were not only less natural than the smart people of society, but they wearied you by the exactions of their drollery. Not to laugh at the sorriest jest was to discredit the jester, and the omission became a serious thing when it touched a man's livelihood. In fact, from first to last, in whatever country I have lived, I have ever found that the best, — that is, the highest society, — was always the most agreeable, as well as the most profitable. Its forms *were not alone* regulated upon the surest basis of comfort, but *its tone ever tended* to promote whatever was pleasurable, and

exclude everything that could hurt or offend. So is it, — your great aristocrats are very democratic in a drawing-room — professing and practising the most perfect equality; while your "rights of man" and "popular sovereignty advocate," insists upon always being the king of his company. Forgive this digression, my dear reader, if for nothing else than because it shall be the last time of my offending.

I had now enjoyed myself at Paris about two months, or thereabouts, in which, having most satisfactorily arranged all my monetary matters, and — besides having a considerable sum in the English funds — found myself down in the "Grand Livre" for a couple of million of francs — a feature which made me a much-caressed individual in that new social order just then springing up, called the "financière" class, one which, if with few claims to the stately manners of the "Faubourg," numbered as many pretty women, and as agreeable ones as could be found anywhere. Had I been matrimonially disposed, this set would certainly have been dangerous ground for me — the attentions which beset me being almost like adulation. The truth was, however, Donna Maria had left an impression which comparison with others did not efface. I felt, if I were to marry, it might as well be for high rank and family influence, since I never could do so for love. My nobility required a little strengthening, nor was there any easier, or more efficient mode of supporting it, than by an alliance with some of those antiquated houses, who, with small fortunes, but undiminished pride, inhabited the solitudes of the "Faubourg St. Germain." I cannot afford space here to recount my adventures in that peaceful and deserted quarter, whose amusements ranged between masses and tric-trac, — where Piety and Pope Joan divided the hours. The antiquity of my family, and the pureness of my Castilian blood! had been the pretensions which obtained admission for me into these sacred precincts, and there, I must say, everything seemed old and worn out: the houses, the salons, the furniture, the masters, servants, horses, carriages — all were as old as the formalities and the opinions they professed.

Even the young ladies had got a premature cast of seriousness that took away every semblance of juvenility. Whether from associating with them, or that I had voluntarily conformed to the staid Puritanism of their manners, I cannot say, but my other acquaintances began to quiz and rally me about my "legitimist" air, and even said that the change had been remarked at Cour.

This was an observation that gave me some uneasiness, and I hastened off to the Duc de St. Cloud, whose kindness had always admitted me to the most open intercourse.

"It is quite true, Creganne," said he, "we all remarked that you were coquetting with the 'vieux' — the old ones of the Faubourg — and although *I* had never any misgivings about you, *others* were less charitable."

"What is to be done, then?" said I, in my distress at the bare thought of seeming ungrateful.

"I'll tell you," said he; "there's the post of secretary of embassy just vacant at Madrid; your knowledge of the language, and your Spanish blood, admirably fit you for the mission. Shall I ask for it in your behalf?"

I could scarcely speak for gratitude. I was longing for some "charge," — some public station, that would give me a recognised position as well as wealth.

The "Duc" hurried from the room, and after an absence of half-an-hour came back, laughing, to say — "This was quite a brilliant idea of mine, for the Minister of Foreign Affairs was just in conversation with the King, and, seeing that they were both in good humour, and discussing the Madrid mission, I even asked for the post of ambassador for you — ay, and what's better, obtained it too."

I could not believe my ears as I heard these words, and the prince was obliged to repeat his tidings ere I could bring myself to credit them. "And now for a little plan of my own," resumed he; "I am about to make a short visit to *England*, and, better still, to Ireland. You must accompany me. *Of* course I travel 'incog.,' which means that *my real rank* will be known to all persons in authority, but

avoiding all state and parade, I shall be able to see something of that remarkable country of which I have heard so much."

I acknowledged a degree of curiosity to the full as great, but bewailed my ignorance of the language, as a great drawback to the pleasures of the journey.

"But you do know a little English," said the Prince.

"Not a word," said I, coolly. "When a child, I believe I could speak it fluently, — so I have heard; but since that period I have utterly forgotten all about it." This may seem to have been a gratuitous fiction on my part, but it was not so; and, to prove it, I must tell the reader a little incident which was running in my mind at that moment. A certain Tipperary gentleman, whose name is too familiar for me to print, once called upon a countryman in Paris, and after ringing stoutly at the bell, the door was opened by a very smartly-dressed "maid," whose grisette cap and apron immediately seemed to pronounce her to be French. "Est Capitaine — est Monsieur O'Shea ici?" asked he, in considerable hesitation.

"Oh sir! you're English," exclaimed the maid, in a very London accent.

"Yes, my little darlin', I was asking for Captain O'Shea."

"Ah, sir, you're Irish!" said she, with a very significant fall of the voice. "So," as he afterwards remarked, "my French showed that I was English, and my English that I was Irish."

Now, although my French would have passed muster from Cannes to Caen, my English had something of the idiomatic peculiarity of the gentleman just alluded to; and were I only to speak once in Ireland, I must be inevitably detected. There was then no choice for it: I must even consent to talk through an interpreter, — a rather dull situation for a man about to "tour it" in Ireland!

As the Prince's journey was a secret in Paris, our arrangements were made with great caution and despatch. We travelled down to Boulogne with merely one other companion, an

old Colonel Demannais, who had been for some years soner in England, and spoke English fluently, and with three servants; there was nothing in our "cortège" beti the rank of his Royal Highness.

Apartments had been prepared for us at Mivart's, a dined each day at the French Embassy, — going to the in the evening, and sight-seeing all the forenoon, lil nuine "country consins." The Court was in Scotlanc even had it been in London, I conclude that the Prince have been received in some mode which should not ha tracted publicity.

Ten days sufficed for "town," and we set out fo land, to visit which his Royal Highness was all impatien eagerness.

Never can I forget the sensations with which I lanc that shore, which, about a dozen years before, I had q barefooted and hungry! Was the change alone in n what had come over the objects, to make them so very di from what they once were? The hotel that I remembe have regarded as a kind of palace, where splendour an fusion prevailed, seemed now dirty and uncared fo waiters slovenly, the landlord rude, the apartments and the food detestable! The public itself, as it pass the pier, was not that gorgeous panorama I once saw the mingled elegance and fashion I used to regard wit eyes of wonderment and envy. What had become of Good looks there were, and in abundance, — for Irish will be pretty, no matter what changes come over the but the men! good lack, what a strange aspect did the sent! Without the air of fashion you see in Paris, more strongly marked characteristic of style and ma the parks of London exhibit, here were displayed a k swaggering self-sufficiency, whose pretension was awf *variance with* the mediocrity of their dress, and th *jocularity that* leered from their eyes. Some were aq *and wore Jersey* shirts and frocks, loose trowsers,

; but they overdid their parts, and lounged like Tom
e in a sea-piece.
hers appeared as *élégans*, and were even greater bur-
es on the part. It was quite clear, however, that these
d no portion of the better classes of the capital, and so I
ned to assure the Prince, whose looks bespoke very
ble disappointment.
Dublin, however, the changes were greater than I
ted. It was not alone that I had seen other and greater
als, where affluence and taste abound, and where, while
ll tide of fashion sets "in" in one quarter, the still more
ng course of activity and industry flows along in an-
; but here an actual decline had taken place in the
rance of everything. The shops, the streets, the in-
ants, all looked in disrepair. There were few carriages,
ng deserving the name of equipage — none of that stir
ovement which characterise a capital. It all looked like
e where people dwelt to wear out their old houses and
rments, and to leave both behind them when no longer
ble; windows mended with paper, pantaloons patched
arti-coloured cloth, "shocking bad hats," mangy car-
s, and great troops of beggars of every age and walk of
icancy, were met with even in the best quarters; and
ll these signs of poverty and decay, there was an air of
ering recklessness in every one, that was particularly
ng. All were out of temper with England and English
and "Ireland for the Irish" was becoming a popular
hrase, pretty much upon the same principle that black-
xtinguish the lights, when luck goes against them, and
a scramble for "the bank" in the dark. The strangest
was, however, that nobody seemed to have died or left
lace since I remembered it as a boy. There went the
Barrister down Bachelor's-walk, with the same sturdy
I used to admire of yore — his cheek a little redder, his
nce somewhat more portly, perhaps, but with the self-
smile with which he then cajoled the jury; and that
ng frown with which he repelled the freedom of a wit-

ness. There were the same civic magistrates, the s attorneys, dancing-masters; ay, even the dandies had been replaced, but were the old crop, sadly running to s and marvellously ill cared for.

Even the Castle officials were beautifully consistent, an true to their old traditions; they were as empty and insole as ever. It was the English pale performed over again at th Upper Castle-yard, and all without its limits were the kern and "wild Irish" of centuries ago.

How is a craft like this ever to take the sea, thought I with misery and mutiny everywhere! with six feet of water i the hold, the crew are turning out for higher wages, an ready to throw overboard the man who counsels them to put hand to the pump!

But what had I to do with all this? nor would I allud to it here, save to mention the straits and difficulties whic beset me, to account for changes that I had never antic pated.

We dined everywhere, from that vice-regal palace in swamp, to the musty halls of the chief-secretary in the Castl We partook of a civic feast, a pic-nic at the waterfall; w had one day with the military; and here, by the way, recognised an old acquaintance of other days, the Hon. Ca tain De Courcy. He was still on the staff, and still consta to his ancient flame, who, with a little higher complexion, a more profuse ringlets, — it is strange how colour and hair on increasing with years, — looked pretty much what remembered her of yore.

"You had better wait for your groom, Mons. Le Comte said De Courcy to me at the review, as I was dismounting speak to some people in the crowd of carriages. "Don't tru those fellows. I once had a valuable mare stolen by one those vagrants, and, what was worse, the rascal rode her at steeple-chase the same day."

"Pas possible!" exclaimed I, at the bare thought of su *an indignity.* "What became of the young villain?"

"I forget now, whether I let him off, or whether he was publicly whipped; but I am certain he never came to good."

I felt a flush of anger rise to my cheek at this speech, but I checked my passion; and well I might, as I thought upon my own condition and upon *his*. To have expended any interest or sympathy as to the boy, besides, would have been absurd, and I was silent. Among our invitations, was one to the house of a baronet, who resided in a midland county, only a few miles from my native place. We arrived at night at Knockdangan Castle, an edifice of modern gothic style, which means a marvellously expensive residence, rendered almost uninhabitable, by the necessity of having winding stairs, narrow corridors, low ceilings, and pointed windows. The house was full of company, the greater part of whom had arrived unexpectedly; still, our reception was everything that genial hospitality could dictate. One of the drawing-rooms had been already converted into a kind of barrack-room, with half a dozen beds in it; and now the library was to be devoted to the Prince, while a small octagon tower leading off it, about the size and shape of a tea-tray, was reserved for me. If these arrangements were attended with inconvenience, certainly nothing in the manner of either host or hostess showed it. They, and their numerous family of sons and daughters, seemed to take it as the most natural thing in life to be thrown into disorder, to accommodate their friends; not alone their friends, but their friends' friends; for so proved more than half of the present company. Several of "the boys," meaning the sons of the host, slept at houses in the neighbourhood; one actually bivouacked in a little temple in the garden. There seemed no limit to the contrivances of our kind entertainers, either in the variety of the plans for pleasure, or the hearty good-nature with which they concurred in any suggestion of the guests. All that Spanish politeness expresses, as a phrase, was here reduced to actual practice. Everything was at the disposal of the stranger. Not alone was he at liberty to ride, drive, *fish, shoot, hunt*, boat, or course at will — but all *his hours were at his* own disposal; and his liberty unfettered

even, as to whether he dined in his own apartment, or joined the general company. Nothing that the most courteous attention could provide was omitted, at the same time that the most ample freedom was secured to all. Here, too, was found a tone of cultivation that would have graced the most polished society of any European capital. Foreign languages were well understood and spoken; music practised in its higher walks; drawing cultivated with a skill rarely seen out of the hands of professed masters; subjects of politics and general literature were discussed with a knowledge and a liberality that bespoke the highest degree of enlightenment; while to all these gifts, the genuine warmth of native character lent an indescribable charm of kindliness and cordiality, that left none a stranger who spent even twelve hours beneath their roof.

The Prince was in ecstasies with everything and every one, and he himself no less a favourite with all. Every fall he got in hunting made him more popular; every misadventure that occurred to him, in trying to conform to native tastes, gave a new grace and charm to his character. The ladies pronounced him "a love;" and the men, in less polished, but not less hearty encomium, called him "a devilish good fellow for a Frenchman."

The habits I have already alluded to, of each guest living exactly how he pleased, gave a continual novelty to the company; sometimes two or three new faces would appear at the dinner-table, or in the drawing-room, and conjecture was ever at work whether the last arrivals had been yet seen, and who were they who presented themselves at table?

"You will meet two new guests to-day, Count," said the host one day, as we entered the drawing-room before dinner: "a Spanish bishop and his niece — a very charming person, and a widow of nineteen! They came over to Ireland about some disputed question of property — being originally Irish by family — and are now, I regret to say, about to return to Spain in a few days. Hitherto a severe cold has confined the *bishop to his* chamber; and his niece, not being, I fancy, a

proficient in any but her native language, had not courage to face a miscellaneous party. They will both, however, favour us to-day; and, as you are the only one here who can command the 'true Castilian tongue,' you will take the Countess in to dinner."

I bowed my acknowledgments, not sorry to have the occasion of displaying my Spanish, and playing the agreeable to my fair countrywoman.

The drawing-room each day before dinner had no other light than that afforded by a great fire of bog deal, which, although diffusing a rich and ruddy glow over all who sat within the circle around it, left the remainder of the apartment in comparative darkness; and few, except those very intimate, were able to recognise each other in the obscurity. Whether this was a whim of the host, or a pardonable artifice to make the splendour of the well-lighted dinner-table more effective, on the principle of orators, who begin at a whisper to create silence, I know not, but we used to jest over the broken shins and upset spider tables, that each day announced the entrance of some guest, less familiarised to the geography of the apartment.

On this particular occasion the party was unusually large; possibly a certain curiosity to see the new guests had added to the number, while some of the neighbouring families were also present. Various were the new names announced; and at last came the bishop, with the lady of the house upon his arm, the young widow following with one of the daughters of the house. I could only distinguish a very white head, with a small black skull-cap, a stooping figure, and a great gold cross, which, I concluded, represented the holy man: something in black, with a very long veil descending from the back of her head, being as evidently the niece.

A few formal introductions were gone through in clever pantomime, dinner was announced, and the company paired off in all stateliness, while the host, seizing my arm, led me across the room, and in a few words presented me to the fair widow, who curtseyed and accepted my arm, and away we

marched in that solemn procession by which people endeavour to thaw the ice of first acquaintance.

"Your first visit to Ireland, I believe, Señhora?" said I, in Spanish, wishing to say something as we walked along.

"Yes, Señhor, and yours also, I understand?" replied she.

"Not exactly," muttered I, taken too suddenly to recover myself, "when I was a boy, a mere child," — I here by accident employed a Mexican word almost synonymous with the French "gamin," — she started, and said eagerly, "How! you have been in Mexico?"

"Yes, Señhora, I have passed some years in that country."

"I am a Mexican," cried she delightedly. "Tell me, where have you travelled, and whom did you know there?"

"I have travelled a good deal, but scarcely knew any one," replied I. "At Guajuaqualla."

"Oh, were you there? — my own neighbourhood — my home," exclaimed she fervidly.

"Then, probably, you know Don Esteban Olares," said I.

"My own father!"

I turned round; our eyes met; it was just at the very entrance of the dinner-room, where a blaze of light was shed on everything, and there upon my arm — her hand trembling, her cheek colourless, and her eyes swimming in tears — was Donna Maria! Neither of us spoke — neither of us could speak! — and while her eyes wandered from my face to the several decorations I wore upon my breast, and I watched with agonizing intensity the look of terror she threw down the table towards the place where her uncle was seated, I saw plainly that some painful mystery was struggling within her mind.

"Do not let my uncle recognise you," said she in a low whisper; "he is not likely to do so, for both his sight and hearing are much impaired."

"*But why* should I not claim him as an old acquaintance, *if not a friend*, Señhora, if he be the same Fra Miguel?"

"Hush, be cautious," cried she; "I will tell you all to-morrow — to-night, if there be a fitting opportunity. Let us talk of something else, or we shall be remarked."

I tried my best to obey her, but I fear my attempt was a poor one; I was able, however, to listen to her with a certain amount of composure, and while doing so, to remark how much she had improved in grace and beauty since we met. Years had developed the charms which girlhood then but shadowed forth, and in the full and liquid softness of her dark and long-lashed eyes, and the playful delicacy of her mouth, I saw how a consciousness of fascination had served to lend new powers of pleasing.

She spoke to me of her widowhood without any affectation of feeling grieved or sorry. So long as Don Geloso had lived, her existence had been like that of a nun in a cloister; he was too jealous to suffer her to go into the world, and save at the Court Chapel each morning and evening, she never saw anything of that brilliant society in which her equals were moving. When her uncle was created Bishop of Seville, she removed to that city to visit him, and had never seen her husband after. Such, in few words, was the story of a life, whose monotony would have broken the spirit of any nature less buoyant and elastic than her own. Don Esteban was dead; and of him she spoke with deep and affectionate feeling, betraying besides that her own lot was rendered almost a friendless one by the bereavement.

That same evening, as we walked through the rooms, examining pictures and ancient armour, of which our host was somewhat vain, I learned the secret to which the Señhora had alluded at table, and divesting which of all the embarrassment the revelation occasioned herself, was briefly this: The Fra, who had never, for some reasons of his own, either liked or trusted me, happened to discover some circumstances of my earlier adventures in Texas, and even traced me in my rambles to the night of my duel with the Ranchero. Hence he drew the somewhat rash and ungenerous conclusion that my character was not so unimpeachable as I affected, and

that my veracity was actually open to question! An active correspondence had taken place between Don Geloso and himself about me, in which the former, after great researches, pronounced that no noble family of my name had existed in old Spain, and that, in plain fact, I was nothing better than an impostor! In this terrible delusion the old gentleman died, but so fearful was he of the bare possibility of injuring one in whose veins flowed the pure blood of Castile, that on his death-bed he besought the Bishop to ascertain the fact to a certainty, and not to desist in the investigation till he had traced me to my birth, parentage, and country. Upon this condition he had bequeathed all his fortune to the Church, and not alone all his own wealth, but all Donna Maria's also.

The Bishop's visit to Ireland, therefore, had no other object than to look for my baptismal certificate, — an investigation, I need scarcely say, somewhat difficult and intricate!

Of course, in this confession, the fair Contessa never hesitated to regard me as an injured and calumniated individual; but so assured was she of the Bishop's desire to endow the Church with her wealth, that he would have less brooked to discover me a noble of title and rank indisputable, than to find me a poor and ignoble adventurer. "Were he but to recognise you," said she, "*I* should be condemned to a nunnery for life!" and this terror, however little startling to *my* ears, had too much of significance to *her* mind to be undervalued.

Of course my present position, — the companionship of the Prince, — the foreign orders I wore, were more than sufficient to accredit me to her as anything I pleased to represent myself; but somehow I felt little inclination for that vein of fiction in which so often and so largely I had indulged! For the first time in my life I regarded this flow of invention as a treachery! and, when pressed by her to relate the full story of my life, I limited myself to that period which, beginning with my African campaign, brought me down to the moment *of telling I was* in love. Such is the simple solution of the *mystery; nor* can I cite a more convincing evidence of the

ennobling nature of the passion, than that it made *me*, such as I was, — tenacious of the truth.

Every succeeding day brought me into closer intimacy with the Señhora, and taught me more to value her for other graces than those of personal beauty. The seclusion in which she had passed her last few years had led her to cultivate her mind by a course of study such as few Spanish women ever think of, and which gave an almost serious character to a nature of more than childlike buoyancy. We talked of her own joyous land, to which she seemed longing to return, and of our first meeting beside the "Rio Colerado," and then, of our next meeting on her own marriage-day, and she wondered where, if ever, we should see each other again? The opportunity was not to be lost. I pressed her hand to my lips, and asked her never to leave me! I told her that, for me, country had no ties, — that I had neither home nor kindred. I would, at that moment, have confessed everything, even to my humble birth! I pledged myself to live with her amidst the sierras of the far west, or, if she liked better, in some city of the old world. I told her that I was rich, and that I needed not that wealth of which her uncle's covetousness would rob her. In fact, I said a great deal that was true, and when I added anything that was not so, it was simply as painters introduce a figure with a "bit of red," to heighten the landscape. I will not weary my *fair* reader with all the little doubts, and hesitations, and fears, so natural for her to experience and express; nor will I tire my male companion by saying how I combated each in turn. Love, like a lawsuit, has but one ritual. First comes the declaration — usually a pretty unintelligible piece of business in either case; then come the "affidavits," the sworn depositions; then follow the cross-examinations; after which, the charge and the verdict. In my case it was a favourable one, and I was almost out of my senses with delight.

The Bishop, with whom my acquaintanceship had never betrayed my secret, was to leave Ireland in a few days, and *the Prince*, to whom I told everything, with the kindness of

a true friend, promised that he would take the very same day for his own departure. The remainder we were to leave to fortune. Love-making left me little time for any other thoughts; but still as, for appearance' sake, I was obliged to pass some hours of every day apart from Donna Maria, I took the occasion of one of these forced absences to visit a scene which had never quitted my mind through all the changeful fortunes of my life — the little spot where I was born. Rising one morning at break of day, I set out for Horseleap, to see once more, and for the last time, the humble home of my childhood. The distance was about sixteen miles; but as I rode slowly, my mind full of old memories and reflections, I did not reach the place till nigh noon. Alas! I should never have known the spot! There had been a season of famine and pestilence, and now the little village was almost tenantless. Many of the cabins were unroofed: in some, the blackened rafters bore tokens of fire. The one shop, that used to supply the humble luxuries of the poor, was closed, and I passed on with a heavy heart towards the cross-roads where "Con's Acre" lay.

I had not gone far when my eye, straining to catch it, detected the roof of the cabin rising above the little thorn hedge that flanked the road. Ay, there was the old stone-quarry I used to play in, as a child, fancying that its granite sides were mountain precipices, and its little pools were lakes. There was the gate on which for hours long I have sat, gazing at the bleak expanse of moorland, and wondering if all the wide world beyond had nothing fairer or more beautiful than this.

"Who lives in that cabin yonder?" asked I, of a peasant on the road.

The man replied that it was "the minister;" adding his name, which, however, I could not catch. Long as I had been away from Ireland, I could not forget that this was the especial title given to the Protestant clergyman of the parish, *and I rode up to* the door wondering how it chanced that he *was reduced to* a dwelling of such humble pretensions. An

oman came out as I drew up, and told me that the curate rom home, but would be back in less than an hour; re- ing me to "put in my beast," and sit down in the parlour came.

accepted the invitation, followed her into the cabin, , although in a condition of neatness very different from I remembered it of old, brought back all my boyish days instant. There was the fireside, where with naked feet ng before the blazing turf, I had sat and slept full many ur, dreaming of adventures which were as nothing to my real life had met with. There the corner where I to sit, throughout the night, copying those law papers ther would bring back with him from Kilbeggan. There the little bed, where often I have sobbed myself to sleep, , wearied and worn out, I was punished for some trifling ion, some slight and accidental mistake. I sat down, overed my face with my hands, for a sense of my utter ness in the world came suddenly over me; I felt as if this hovel was my only real home, and that all my success in as a mere passing dream.

eanwhile the old woman, with true native volubility, was ining how the Bishop — "bad scran to him! wouldn't let v'rence have pace and ease till he kem and lived in the h, though there wasn't a spot fit for a gentleman in the e length and breadth of it! and signs on it," added she, had to put up with this little place here, they call Con's , and it was all a ruin when we got it."

And who owned this cabin before?" asked I.

A villain they call Con Cregan, your honour; the biggest ye ever heard of; he was paid for informin' agin the le, and whin the Government had done wid him, they sported him too!"

Had he any children, this same Con?"

He had a brat of a boy that was drowned at 'say,' they ne; but I'd never believe it was that way that Con Cre- s son was to die!"

I need scarcely remark that I saw no inducement for prolonging this conversation, wherein all the facts quoted were already familiar, and all the speculations the reverse of flattery; and I was far more agreeably occupied in discussing the eggs and milk the old lady had placed before me, when the door opened, and the curate entered. A deep cavernous cough, and a stooped figure, announcing the signs of some serious chest disease, were all I had time to observe; when with the politeness of a gentleman, he advanced toward me. The first sound of his voice was enough, and I cried out, "Lyndsay! my oldest and best friend — don't you know me?"

"I am ashamed to say that I do not," said he, faltering while he still held my hand, and gazed into my face.

"Not yet?" asked I again, smiling at the embarrassment of his countenance.

"Not even yet," said he. "Tell me, I beseech you, where did we meet?"

"Come here," said I, leading him to the door, and pointing to the wide-stretching moor that lay before us; "it was there — yonder, where you see that heavy cloud-shadow stealing along, — yonder we first met. Do you know me now?"

He started; his pale cheek grew paler, and he fell upon my neck in a burst of tears. Who shall ever know the source, or what the meaning? They were not of joy, still less of sorrow, — they were the outbreak of a hundred emotions. Old memories of happy days, never to come back — boyish triumphs, successes, failures — moments of ecstasy — of bitter anguish; his own bleak joyless existence perhaps contrasting with mine, and then at last the fell consciousness of the malady in which he was but lingering out life.

"And here are you, and here I!" cried he, in a voice which his faltering accents made scarce intelligible; "who should say that we were to meet thus?" Then, as if his words had conveyed a meaning of which he was ashamed, he blushed deeply, and said, "And oh, my friend! how truly you told *me that life* had its path for each, if we but knew how to *choose it.*"

ust not say how the hours were passed, nor how it was
ll ere either of us guessed it. Lyndsay insisted upon
every adventure that had befallen me, questioning me
as I went, how each new feature of prosperity had
ed with me," and whether gold had yet hardened my
nd taught me indifference to the poor.
ld him of my love, and with such rapturous delight,
even offered to aid me in my object, by marrying me
na Maria; a piece of generous zeal, I am certain, that
ted less in friendship than in the prospect of a proselyte
niece of a bishop, too! Poor fellow, he might make
onverts if he were thus easily satisfied.
next day I drove Donna Maria out for an airing, and,
ccupying her mind with various matters, contrived to
our excursion to Horseleap. "What a dreary spot
ve chosen for our drive!" said she, looking around her.
o you see yonder little hut," said I, "where the smoke
s?"
e that poor cabin yonder! You have not come to show
," said she, laughing.
en so, Maria," said I; "to show you that poor and
lut, and to tell you that it was there I was born — a
's son; that from that same lowly roof I wandered out
e world friendless and hungry; that partly by energy,
by a resolution to succeed, partly by the daring deter-
on that would not admit a failure, I have become what I
titled, honoured, wealthy, but still the son of a poor
I could not have gone on deceiving you, even though
confession should separate us for ever." I could not speak
nor needed I. Her hand had already clasped mine, as
murmured — "Yours more than ever."
ow is the moment, then, to become so," said I, as I lifted
m the carriage and led her within the cabin.
e company were already waiting dinner ere we returned
Castle. "I have to make our excuses," said I, to the
; *but we prolonged* our drive to a considerable dis-

"Ah, we feared you might have taken the road by the lake, where there is no turning back," said she.

"Exactly, madam; that is what we did precisely, for we are married!"

Need I dwell upon the surprise and astonishment of this announcement? The bishop — fortunately it was in Spanish — uttered something very like an oath. The bride blushed — some of the ladies looked shocked — the men shook hands with me, and the Prince, saluting Donna Maria with a most hearty embrace, begged to say, "that the lady would be very welcomely received in Paris, since it was the only drawback to my appointment as an ambassador — that I was unmarried."

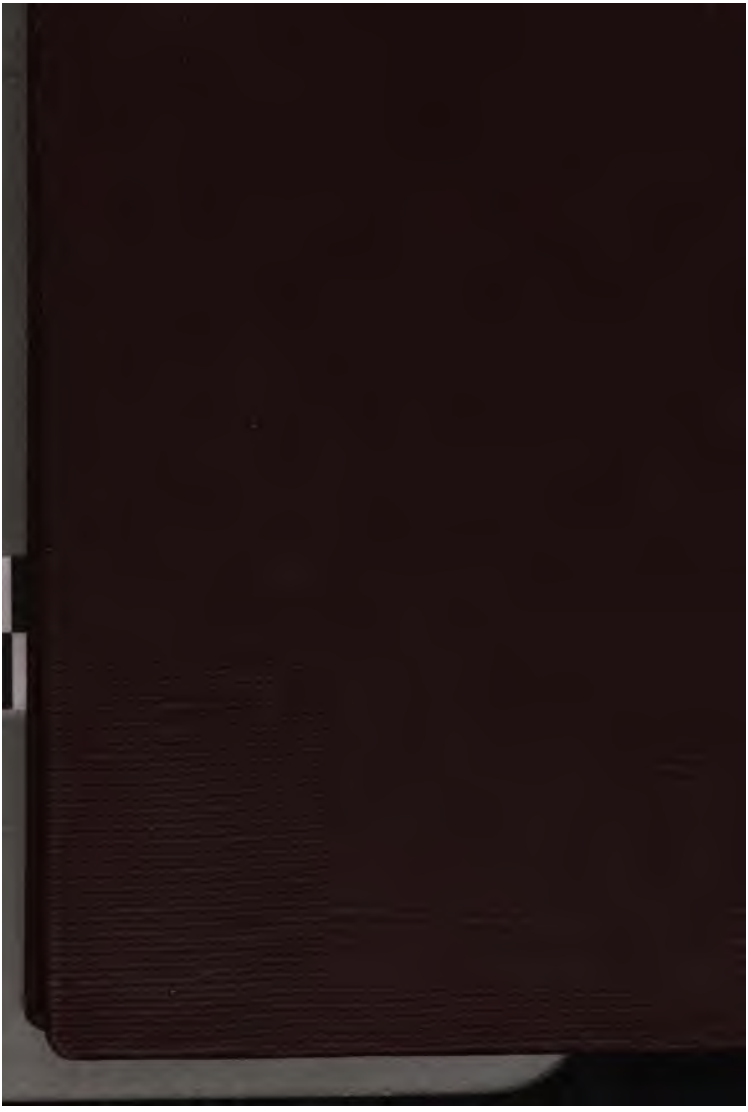
Here I have done, — not that my Confessions are exhausted, but that I fear my reader's patience may be; I may, however add, that this was not the only "Spanish marriage" in which I had a share, — that my career in greatness was not less eventful than my life in obscurity, and that I draw up at this stage, leaving it for the traveller to say if he should ever care hereafter to journey further with me.

THE END.

PRINTING OFFICE OF THE PUBLISHER.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

This book is under no circumstances to be taken from the Building

NOV 5 - 1916

Form 410